

SIGHT AND SOUND

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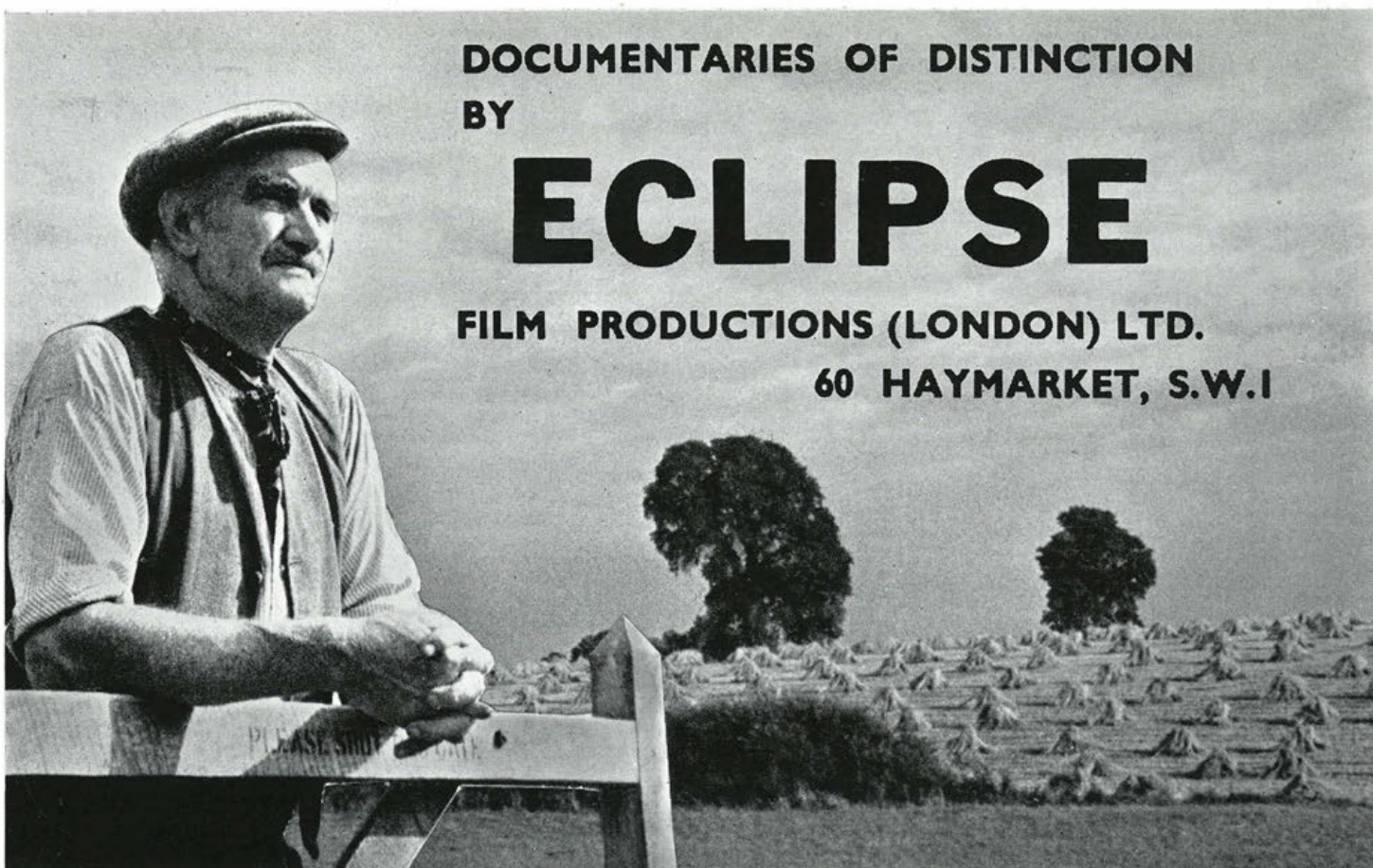
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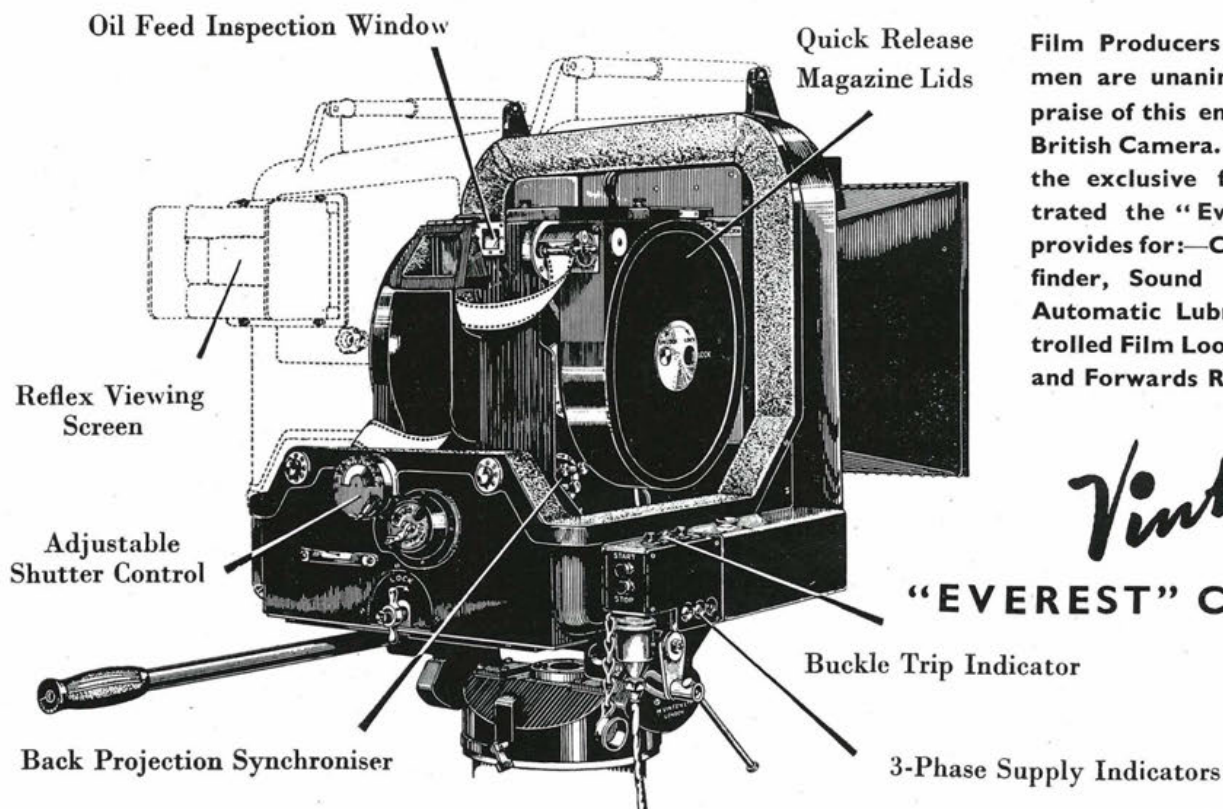
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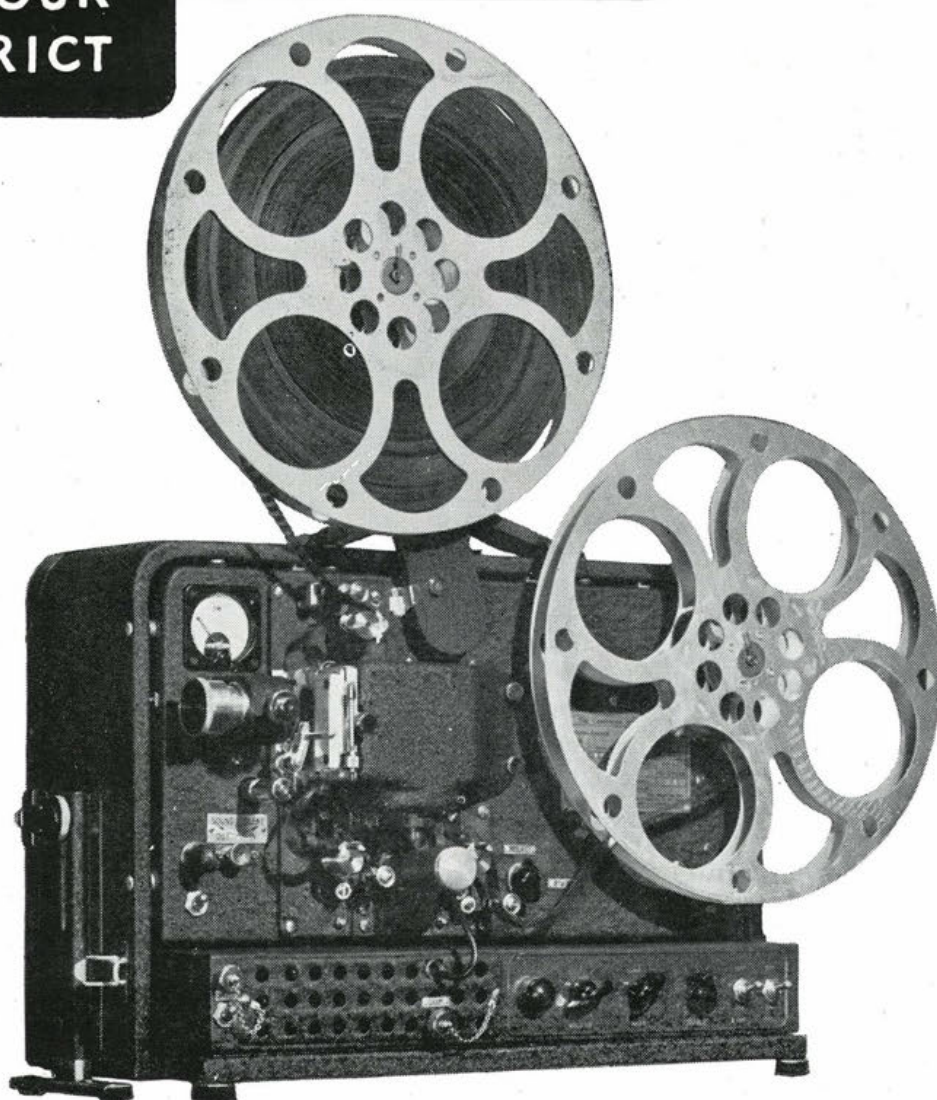
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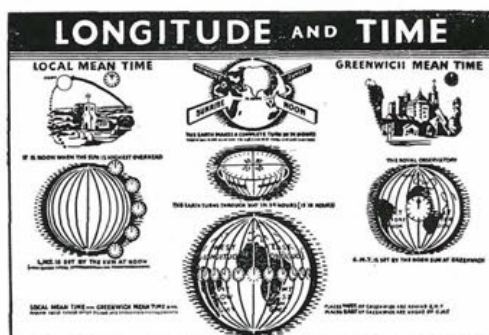
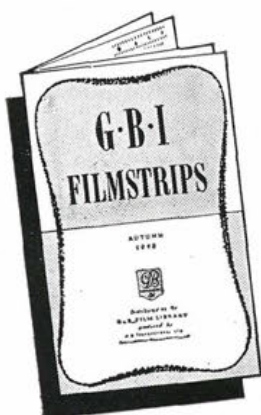
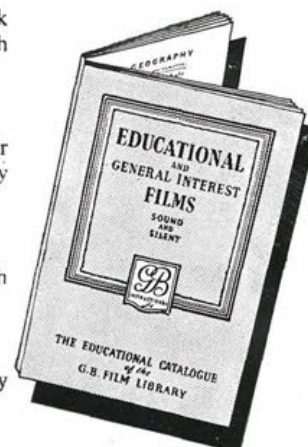
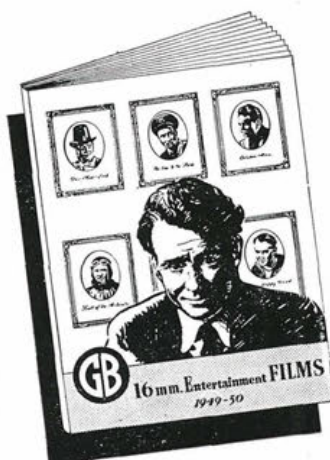
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SIGHT AND SOUND

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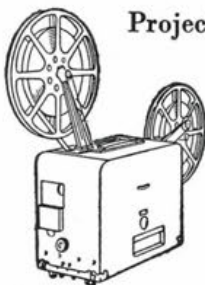
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GERMAN

SYMPOSIUM

Quite a number of film critics have been to Germany recently. In the following pages two of them, H. H. WOLLENBERG and DORÉ SILVERMAN, give their impressions.



Berliner Ballade.

Alf Teichs-Produktion

FROM ADOLF HITLER TO STEWART GRANGER

By

H. H. WOLLENBERG

"FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER", that provocatively titled book, it seems, could soon be followed by another volume entitled "From Hitler to Stewart Granger". This is the conclusion one must draw from certain post-war developments in Germany, which have so far hardly been noticed outside the former Reich.

However, they should not pass unnoticed, if the right conclusions are drawn from that remarkable book "From Caligari to Hitler". Its author, a former well-known German film critic, Dr. Kracauer, made a serious attempt to show the inter-relationship between the German film and that psychological climate which ripened the people for

the Hitler myth. Film producers generally watch closely the mood of the public and try to make their films accordingly. This mood, therefore, was reflected in the German productions characteristic of the fourteen years which preceded Hitler's rise.

If we accept Dr. Kracauer's thesis, there is every reason to keep a close eye on the present film scene in Germany. Anyway, Hitler himself and his propaganda chief, Dr. Goebbels, were convinced that the cinema, with its suggestive power and its emotional mass appeal, was probably the most important instrument with which to hold a grip on the minds of their fellow-countrymen. As I

pointed out in my recently published book, "Fifty Years of German Film", annual cinema attendances rose from 250 millions in 1933 (the year when Hitler took over) to over 1,000 millions in 1942. This, of course, was the result of a cleverly devised policy of boosting the German cinema. We are now in a position to assess German audience reaction under post-war conditions. The astonishing result is that we could summarise our survey by the formula "From Hitler to Stewart Granger". The clue can be found in a poll held in the three Western Zones by a German film paper.

A questionnaire was sent to some 3,000 exhibitors in the three zones, asking them to nominate the films with the greatest box-office success during 1948. They were asked to differentiate clearly between the periods before and after the Currency Reform.

Pre-Reform results from the British Zone showed that the British film *Madonna of the Seven Moons* topped the list, with *Caravan* and *The Magic Bow* taking second and third places. Comparable results from the American Zone showed *Caravan* still taking second place, with two American features first and third.

Post-Currency Reform results from the British Zone placed *Marriage in the Shadow* (*Ehe im Schatten*) first, a result differing strikingly from the flop the same film proved in London, most significant for the differences of mentality. This was followed by *Madonna of the Seven Moons* and another German film in the third place. The results from the American Zone for this period are even more significant in their acclamation of British films. All three top films are British, despite the obvious American competitive advantage. These films are *The Magic Bow*, *Caravan* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, in that order. The fourth place was taken by the American film *Song of Bernadette*.

Conditions in the French Zone can hardly be compared with those in the other two Western Zones, with which it was first linked up later in the year. As a result, the three films which topped the list before the Currency Reform were French. However, the scene changed after the Reform. Heading the list came the French film *The Count of Monte Cristo*, but the British *Caravan* was second with an American film third.

The balance of this poll is undoubtedly of great interest, not only for the British film industry, but for the moral which should be drawn by public opinion and those responsible for the line which future thought is to take. No less important than the complimentary fact that British films headed the German poll, is the preference shown for a distinct type of film, which one could almost define as the "Granger" film, for in all three films which scored so highly, he is the star. In other words, Britain's most popular screen-star, Stewart Granger, seems the strong appeal to German filmgoers.

However, to return to Kracauer's methods, we must ask: what has been going on in German studios since the Hitler collapse? The remarkably steady revival of German film-making can best be illustrated by the following figures. In the first post-war year, 1946, four new German films appeared on the German screens. In 1947 their number had increased to seven and in 1948 to twenty-six. They were made by thirty-four companies, licensed for feature-film production by the Allied Occupation Authorities. More significant for our purpose, however, than these

figures, is the question as to what sort of films have been made by those thirty-four producers? In this country we have so far had a chance of viewing only two of them: *The Murderers are Among Us* and *Marriage in the Shadow*, both produced by the Soviet-licensed DEFA Company.

A German film journal has taken the trouble of analysing the subject-matter of the whole output. Here are the results.

The total of German films released or completed but not yet shown or in production was *seventy* at the beginning of this year. Of this total, *thirteen* subjects have a distinctly political flavour, including two which present their story in a humorous or satirical manner. They deal with such provocative themes as war-guilt, racial persecution, pacifism, land-reform, and so on. Another *thirty-one* films (including fifteen of the light, humorous type) deal with a variety of contemporary problems, but without political implications; matrimonial problems, caused by the war for instance, post-war youth, readjustment of returning servicemen, black-market, bureaucracy—and so on. The third category is entertainment pure and simple. It comprises romance, musicals, crime thrillers, escapist material of all kinds, and its total is *thirty-seven*, including fifteen comedies. Finally, there are *four* period and biographical pictures.

SATIRE AT ITS BEST

The conclusion to be drawn is, that of the *seventy* films made, no less than *forty-four* (or more than half) are films with a present-day background and with a contemporary message of some kind. This analysis goes to show that German film audiences are not flocking to their "locals" merely for the escapist charm of Stewart Granger films. It is, therefore, the more urgent to see what sort of message is being carried by German realistic films. Many of them are obviously enough cheap and sentimental melodramas, with a superficial spattering of social implication.

Two of the recently completed German films I saw struck me as really sincere and serious. "Serious", though, may not seem to be the correct description of one of them: *Berlin Ballade*, which is satire at its best. However, behind all its sparkling fun you can distinctly sense its seriousness. Its approach, its style, its cinematic way of presenting and interpreting the present situation, as seen from an ordinary Berliner's viewpoint, is as unorthodox and revolutionary as was the *Caligari* film in 1920. There is, as compared with other post-war films with a background of German ruins, no room for self-pity and gloom. The effect is the stronger. I think it a brilliant achievement, and people in Switzerland evidently feel the same way; for they have been flocking to it at Zurich, where I had the good fortune of seeing it, for many weeks.

Liebe 47 (*Love 47*), the other noteworthy production, is a very different proposition; it is serious in the literal sense. It tells the tragic story of a German woman from the days of Hitler's glory (when she got married) right to the present when, facing an apparently hopeless future, she is about to commit suicide. At last she finds a new interest and meaning in Life, at the side of a man in a similar position. The film allows a deep and convincing insight into a German woman's mind and feelings and fate; she is brilliantly impersonated by Hilde Krahl. Slow-moving in

SIGHT AND SOUND

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

As from the next issue, which will appear on November 30th, SIGHT AND SOUND becomes a monthly film review. This will be Volume 19, No. 1. It will be edited in future by Gavin Lambert.

The magazine will be available by subscription, as before, or through the leading bookstalls. Further details will be sent to present subscribers in due course.

parts, and generally more dependent on dialogue than pictorial interpretation, it contains a number of gripping and sometimes fascinating sequences.

Another recently completed picture with a purpose is entitled *The Challenge*. However, some really responsible people I saw in Germany are seriously worried about its actual effect upon the German mass-mind, intoxicated by racial propaganda for so many years. The well-known actor and scenario writer, Fritz Kortner, who worked for a while in British studios before going to America, returned to Germany to make this film. It is the first post-war film to be made in a two-language version (English and German) and shows Kortner in the principal part of a German-Jewish professor. Incidentally, the cast includes Rosemary Murphy, daughter of Robert D. Murphy, political adviser to General Clay. The story tells of a German-Jewish professor who, after the war, returns from exile in America to a German University, in spite of advice against doing so. His disappointing experiences are the subject of the action.

Is this film authentic, with its disquieting implications of a revival of past evils in certain quarters of the Germany of 1948? If so, it is an alarming signal. We are the more inclined, however, to take its message seriously when we look at another new German production, which tries to say something which we find more difficult to digest.

The title of this film is *The Sons of Herr Gaspary*. The producer of this picture noting, maybe, that the screen's former offerings of melodrama sprinkled with weak anti-Fascism were no longer "box-office", has made a round-about turn. Herr Gaspary, the film tells us, had two sons: one followed his anti-Nazi father into the pleasures of Swiss exile; the other remained with his mother, true to the Fatherland. This lady marries a General and the boy who is with her becomes an enthusiastic Squadron Leader in the Luftwaffe. The end of hostilities brings a transformation in the family fortunes: the emigrants have waxed rich. Mother and son, who remained in Germany, are poor (but honest!). Needless to say, the latter commands the whole sympathy of the film-maker, not for reasons of social consciousness, but of nationalism. The ex-Squadron Leader leaves his brother in no doubt that he has to hold his tongue because Germany lost the war, and that only because "the others" had more to fight with! But (bless the Fatherland!), he persuades his erring brother to return from his Swiss haven to Hamburg, and work side by side in poor honesty (when not honest poverty), wherefrom the German filmgoer concludes that he can depend on the lads!

If this is the type of film we can expect from Germany in the future, we have every prospect to begin a new chapter, headed simply—"From Granger to Hitler".

THE FILM IN GERMANY

By

DORÉ SILVERMAN

IN 1946 I attended the International Film Festival at Cannes. In 1947, it was the International Film Festival at Brussels, and 1948 saw a similar Festival at Venice.

This year it was Hamburg, where I attended the International Congress of Documentary Film. The difference was more than titular. Here there were no *banquets d'honneur*, no luncheons and receptions by rival international delegations, no queue of film stars trying to capture the public eye and the newsreel camera lens, no endless champagne, no studio visits and no pleasure jaunts.

For this was bombed and battered Hamburg, Germany's second city and her greatest seaport, with a maritime activity little more than that of a fishing village.

There were just two social occasions—a tea-reception by the Lord Mayor of Hamburg (the ancient Hanseatic city still uses the title of "First Mayor") on behalf of the Senate, held in the massive Town Hall, and a supper given by the German organisers of the Congress in the giant Shell Haus pleasantly situated alongside the Alster Lake.

Films Section of the Control Commission had inspired the gathering, but the working committee was entirely German. Nevertheless, numerically and influentially, Britain's delegates were the most powerful.

They found a hefty programme awaiting them. Twelve European countries, and Australia, Russia, the United States and Argentine had entered ten full-length and over ninety short films. Morning sessions were given over to short films, alternating with discussions and debates. Shorts filled the afternoon sessions and in the evenings the features took the screen.

Britain could look on the Congress with a fatherly eye, for it was in this country that the film of actuality really came into being. It was John Grierson, the acknowledged father of the documentary film—now head of the Films Division at the Central Office of Information—who defined documentary as "the creative interpretation of actuality".

That definition has, over years of film-making, broadened. It has been given new aspects, new approaches, new



Berliner Ballade

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Berliner Ballade

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interpretations, as nation after nation regarded the infant and applied the brush of their own culture, yet the documentary remains in essence what it was, and its function is still to be summarised—to tell how.

In doing this, it may be objective, subjective, interpretative, allusive, make its statement directly or indirectly—at Hamburg it was, in turn, all these. Like runners in a relay race, each nation has taken over the baton, and at Hamburg Britain was proud to welcome fellow-entrants as equals.

Britain opened the screenings with *Scott of the Antarctic*, of which Germans were heard to observe that it did not pay sufficient attention to the scientific aspects of the expedition.

Flaherty's ineffably lovely *Louisiana Story* with its superb photography, brilliant cutting, and its apt and eloquent music, was rapturously received in the 600-seater Urania Cinema. Sweden's contribution was *Himlaspelet*, already seen in London. Is it allegory, parable or folk-tale?

The same country offered a number of shorts, three of which were the work of Arne Sucksdorff, including his now world-famous *People of the City*. In all his films, this young film-maker displays his predilection with water. He uses water as a violinist uses his strings; he gives to water

rhythm, pattern shape. In his hands it becomes something plastic.

From France came a charming colour-cartoon, *The Little Soldier* and a series of interpretative films, *Rodin*, *Aubusson* and *Van Gogh* among them. But perhaps the most remarkable short film was the Swiss *Nebel* (*Flying Tide*) made with a time-lapse camera on the peaks of the Rigi. Here Martin Rikli has created an absorbing and extraordinary cloudland-ballet.

His camera, run at various speeds, has resulted in the most fascinating effects. At times, the clouds have the motion and rhythm of waves; one is presented with the motion of the sea, with the waves having the appearance, the texture of clouds. Again, clouds race, interweave, battle against and in between one another. Sunshine through an upper layer of wispy clouds on to a thicker, lower stratum creates a lacework effect as if projected downwards by a celestial projector. As one of the audience put it: "It is a *Secrets of Nature* film in astrological terms, or something visually contrapuntal".

Italy, Holland, Poland, Spain took the screen, and the Germans themselves, with a feature-length tale from Bali, *Der Wunderbare Kris*, only moderate, and a programme of shorts. To this we were summoned for 9 a.m. When I left at midday they were still showing them!

From Russia came the coloured *Song of Siberia*, a rather revolting short, *Instinct of Animals*, and an account of a recent military concert in Berlin in honour of composer Alexandrov.

Not one Austrian film has reached London since the war, but there was one on view, *Men Among Sharks*. This was notable for some superb under-water photography, and also for the fact that Hans Hass, its producer, delivered a commentary which did not cease for one second of its eighty minutes.

But what of the German films beyond the confines of the Congress cinema? Money is still scarce for production, which means that ideas have to be used instead. Studios, short of building material, mean improvised sets in improvised buildings. But that talent is there, I do not for the moment doubt.

That is illustrated by *Berliner Ballade*, which I urge some London cinema to seize for immediate showing. It is the first film-revue I have seen in over a quarter-of-a-century of film-viewing, a revue not of the spectacular Ziegfeld type, but of comment and satire, after the manner of "Sweet and Low". It is a revue which is a review—of passing events and customs, shooting folly as it flies. One item, satirising Four-Power Conferences, is reminiscent of the famous "Green Table" number in the pre-war Jooss Ballet.

Also attracting notice is Helmuth Kautner's *Der Apfel ist Ab*, a modern version of Adam and Eve. Only occasionally funny, its message often cloudy, this tale of a modern young man, Adam, and the two women between whom he could not choose, Lilith and Eve, has a long flashback to a revue-type Garden of Eden, wherein the protagonists—in cellophane clothing—get mightily bored with one another. This Paradise is the ultimate in ennui. Like British shop windows, its most desirable articles are not for local consumption. "For Exhibition Only" notices bar this and that. Paradise is indeed a hell! In the end, the two women are fused into one, and Adam finds the choice made for him. From which you may draw your own moral. Satire? Irony? Allegory? A message of nil-desperandum? Eve is played by 24-year-old Bettina Moissi, daughter of the late Alexander Moissi, the German Shakespearean actor.

The German Catholics have conducted a campaign against this film, and have succeeded in getting its showing severely restricted. They resent the cabaret treatment of the story of the Fall.

Just out of the studios is *Love 1947*, with Hilde Krahel in the lead, under the direction of her husband, Wolfgang Liebeneiner. A girl, despondent and hopeless, about to commit suicide, encounters a war cripple, bent on similar intention. They tell each other the tale of their war-time lives, and end by deciding to live on, together. Like the first German post-war film to be shown in Britain, *The Murderers Are Amongst Us*, *Love 1947* is steeped in self-pity, and in that it is at least faithful to the German spirit.

In many cities, German films such as these are second in popularity to British films, which are enjoying wide success. The representative of the British Eagle-Lion, which appears to be scooping the pool as far as British films are concerned,

stated: "British films are the most popular in Germany. We have 57 films in circulation, and we are doing more business than all the American films in the Western zones. One in four of all German cinemas—outside the Russian zone, where we are not allowed to trade—shows an Eagle-Lion film weekly.

Yes, the Germans like British films, in general. They like romantic stories, but not those of English suburban, middle-class life. So *The Weaker Sex*, *All Over the Town*, or the Huggett series are not being offered to them. They do like films with overseas, scenic settings, which cater for their travel-hunger. Thus, *End of the River* and *Eureka Stockade* had a great success with them.

Gangster films are largely taboo. As a Munich journalist put it, "Germany is a country which has experienced murder as a function of government, where death got a mass face. Therefore the longing for the sweet customs of life is stronger".

One British film upon which I have no German report to offer is *Easy Money*, which dealt with football pools. This has been banned by the Film Section of the Control Commission, on the ground that it would give Germans the impression that Britain is a nation of gamblers.

A poll taken by German exhibitors in the three Western zones gave six British films out of nine top marks for popularity, in terms of box-office takings. In the British zone, a German film was first, *Madonna of the Seven Moons* second and a German film third. In the U.S. zone, *The Magic Bow*, *Caravan* and *Madonna of the Seven Moons* were the top money-makers, and in the French zone, a French film was first, *Caravan* second and *The Wicked Lady* third.

No wonder that Mr. Rank has close on two million Marks in his blocked account in Germany. No wonder that both Sir Alexander Korda and the Associated-British-Pathe organisation have also set up distribution offices in Germany.

In the German films, several pre-war favourites, like Gustave Froelich and Hans Albers still rate high in popularity. Emil Jannings, who was a leading light, under Goebbels, in Germany's war-time film production, and as such was responsible for more than one anti-British film, is free, but is not acting at the moment.

The problem of the Nazi film players and directors has been approached differently by the Allies, and the British and the Americans have divergent policies. In production, directors in the U.S. zone have been depending upon former German actors, many prominent under the Nazis, some of whom have only recently been de-Nazified.

The British, however, prefer to give new players a chance, since German audiences, entertainment starved, are not too critical. This policy has resulted in much-praised performances in highly-successful films like *In jenen Tagen*, *Arche Nora*, *Wege im Zweilicht* and *Menschen in Gottes Hand*.

Will German film production again attain the peaks it reached in its heyday, in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties? Perhaps the time to answer that question has not arrived.

THE PRODUCER'S CREDIT

By

OSWELL BLAKESTON

WHEN CAVALCANTI told me he is always being introduced to young men who want to become film directors but never to young men with ambitions to produce, I was not surprised. I know people no longer believe the chestnut fables about producers who can't read or who arrange a location in Devonshire during August and expect to find blossom on the fruit trees, but people simply can't see why the producer's position is so inflated. They think of a producer in this country—oh, they'll all grant you Erich Pommer was an exceptional figure—as a man who gives banquets to press agents and is photographed putting stars under contract. Now direction, the young men say, is an honest job.

Some who think in this fashion have wondered if the new distribution of responsibilities, under Independent Frame planning, may eliminate the producer as an extra passenger; or else—perhaps the producer will be blue-printed for something more than the role of a glorified production manager.

The painter, Z. Ruskowski, suggested to me it might be possible to commend to producers considerations of interpretation of form and to directors interpretation of content. Maybe there is some germ here of future development, for it is true that form has been neglected. Audiences are apathetic—the same old screen, the same old punctuation marks of long-shots and close-ups, etc. But new forms could be devised to tell new stories. Ruskowski had thought of one, for a special story, with two pictures side by side, two screens each in a different colour mode, two parallel narratives which finally merge with colour resolution.

TOO REAL

Not an easy idea, but possibly through some such stimulus we might recapture a sense of imaginative reality. We accepted the magic of early films because the world of jerky movements was unlike our own, because we had to use imagination before we could enter that world. Now, we take the form of cinema, the polished technical form, for granted. We lose imaginative reality because the cinema has become too real, in the sense of everyday.

This is a pleasing speculation, but important in our context because it shows how people outside the film world cannot imagine the present essential function of the producer, it shows how far they have to go to invent justification. The fact is films, whether planned on Independent Frame lines or in the pre-I.F. style, have to be made by human beings. The producer's job covers the human angles.

The good producer looks after the humanities, and one cannot expect those who are not working in films to guess how very much this is a full-time occupation. There may or

may not be a new category of Film-Form-Producers in the future, but there will always be a need for someone (whatever he calls himself) who does the work which is at present carried out by the man we for the present call the producer.

At the top, as David Lean told me, the producer must sustain the director as a human being. The director looks to the producer to encourage and advise him, and this means the producer must be capable of understanding the director's thoughts and aspirations, creative ideas and æsthetic sensibilities.

NOT TOO MUCH

It does not follow the producer must be a second director, that he *must* have pre-established ideas about every shot in the picture. Indeed, when I discussed this problem with Dan Birt, he said: "I believe a producer should not have too much technical knowledge. The producer's place is not on the floor: the producer needs to keep his distance in order to keep his balance. Then when he discusses the film with the director, he can underline a fault (say in the rushes) without immediately proposing an exact way of solving the problem. It may not be the director's style to correct the sequence in the way a producer with considerable technical knowledge might immediately be tempted to suggest. The ideal thing is for the producer to hand the problem back to the director with no more than, 'What else do you suggest?'"

The producer may or may not have the technical knowledge of a director, but his job as producer is to keep the director working, as a human machine, at the top of his form.

Theoretically it would be possible, under some new distribution of responsibilities, to strip the producer of much present power. A producer to-day wins distinction because of his gift for choosing stories—but the final choice of story might be left to the scenario editor. A producer to-day may gain *réclame* because he has insight when selecting creative workers instead of re-employing old X just because (in the actual words of an executive) "we can be certain how much money he will lose, whereas this new man . . ."—but a good agent might be given charge of fostering talent. Strip the producer of such present responsibilities—of finding stories and talent, etc.—and you are still left with the urgency for a man to deal with the humanities.

Independent Frame technique can solve difficulties in advance, yet technical solutions remain at the mercy of the human element in interpretation and execution. Until we have films made by robots, a producer is a key man however much responsibility is shifted among other film workers.

How could one expect those, who are not in personal contact with the studios, to realise the producer's essential claim to credit lies in the intricate field of human relations? And that this is no ordinary job, no job for the full or un-gifted? That this is Grade A work?

Apart from the producer's genuine claim to fame as top-ranking ambassador, there are reasons, as Gordon Wellesley pointed out to me, why the producer's advertised prestige is of practical importance in picture-making. If the producer were kept "under cover", he would not be the same effective agent in the wider field of public relations outside the studio. Wellesley suggested, as example, the production manager who gets better co-operation from civic authority after a courtesy visit has been paid to the seat of authority by *the producer*. Then a ship may be whisked from a harbour, a street emptied of pedestrians, and so on. The director, the only man with comparable prestige, is fully occupied with artistes and technicians. It is for the producer, as ambassador, to work worldly miracles. A nation guards its embassy's prestige, and so films have to advertise the producer's worth—just so long as people are human beings.

We have said the producer might, under some new planning, be stripped of certain existing powers; but there are excellent human reasons why this might be a dangerous

transference. The producer who is finally responsible for story and creative talent is the one man in the film business who cannot pass the buck. The bad cameraman can blame the director, and the bad director can blame the artistes; but by standing firm the producer sets an example to others to shoulder responsibility and pride. Again a point in human terms, but an exceptionally strong one. The evasive worker is seldom the good worker.

In Gordon Wellesley's opinion, the rise of the writer-producer has been a definite step forward. The writer who has turned producer, who has the ability to turn producer, becomes a good contact man in a story-telling industry. Naturally, he is likely to be fitted to take on symbolical responsibility for final choice of story and its treatment, and he is not likely to be guilty of the cardinal sin of ignoring the humanity of script-writers. We all know what happens to a story-telling medium when the writers lose interest. It is thanks to the writer-producer that proposals are now being made to pay script-writers on a royalty basis and so bind them by more personal ties to their work.

But—but it is only if the writer has the precious human touch with his fellow workers—it is only then he can succeed as a producer, as a man who earns every inch of the credit which achieves so much more than acknowledgment of work well done.

THE CRITIC'S SUCCESS

By

JOHN H. WINGE

THIS TIME is as good as any to look into the mirror and get disgusted. Among other shady doings, I have been writing critical reviews of motion pictures in Europe and for Europe for quite a few years. Suffering from what in dizzy company is called highbrow taste, if not worse, and writing for a similarly stricken segment of the public, I have limited my writings to films which I have sincerely considered good. I have not cared to point at every single colossal feature to tell you it stinks. I'd rather ploughed through the remarkable films and gave my reasons why I considered them remarkable, thus establishing standards on which the reader might let crawl up his appreciation for this film and others. We don't like to butcher films or their makers. We are peaceful and hope for improvement by notching up demands.

I don't suffer from the illusion of being unbiased. I am definitely subjective and in a permanent ambush for certain things prepared to cheer or boo them, respectively. As a critic I am a moralist trying to teach according to my ethical ideals which I consider high and occasionally swap for new ones. My country being too Young and Vigorous to sustain a periodical devoted to students of the cinema, I have found my readers only abroad. My fate is by no means extraordinary but shared by that handful of American film critics who sulk at Hollywood.

A grim destiny has not spared me from living on both sides of the barricades—sometimes even simultaneously like a Hyde not alternating with Jekyll but being multiplied by him. In other words, I was a journalist among journalists and also a member of Hollywood's motion picture industry. I listened to fellow critics as well as to fellow film makers. I heard the deep inner opinions of the moulders of public opinion and I heard the convictions of producers, directors, stars and writers. It was off the record and as honest as men are only in locker rooms or in shirt-sleeves with at least their neckties off.

The truth is that the great majority of professional film critics writing for domestic or foreign papers is bare of any general education. They are unable to judge a motion picture as an expression of contemporary history and culture because they know no history and no culture. They are unable to judge its technical quality because they don't know how a film is being made. Esthetically, they cry about Lassie and scream with Abbott and Costello. They cannot compare acting with standards set by great actors of various countries because they don't know them. They cannot judge the writing because their knowledge of literature is restricted to "best sellers", at the best. They cannot judge the film because they know only the "latest ones"—having no memory for the older ones, no interest, no power of

observation. As general journalistic failures, they have been deported to the Hollywood mines. Of course, their editors don't want any real criticism. They want plain reports that re-tell the story and plenty of stuff about stars, cheesecake photos, divorces, romances and cute sayings. To them Hollywood News are whorehouse news fit to print. Betty Grable's legs and Jane Russell's breasts have been declared parts of the public domain like the Grand Canyon or Our Way of Life. All that is being spread in gorgeous technicolor throughout the publications with the full support of the publicity departments and everybody is happy.

WHIMPERING BANG

Particularly the other side of the barricade. Originally, I had believed that also these barricades were done with mirrors. But they are real. Freshly printed gushing "reviews" spelled out by professional fans are being actually studied by the studios like surprising and important revelations. Admittedly, they limit themselves to the few trade and the four local newspapers of Los Angeles. Those who take the pains to read in addition the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and *Time* are already suspected as subversives particularly if they can read without moving their lips.

But here the pitiful influence of film criticism ends with a silent bang. Because those critics who are not included in that cosy lot of admirers by principle are working completely off bounds. I have frequently felt like a sectarian walking unrecognised through the crowds of unbelievers—all damned to brimstone and Hollywood pictures forever. While working in Europe I had not much hope that the hard work of analysis and synthesis done by a few serious-minded fellow critics and by me would influence the faraway film makers to a great extent. All through the years our work of love and patience had gone on and so had the commercial formula.

Watching the formula at work right inside of Hollywood's innards, I have seen by now what fools we have been with our brave postulates, our manly manifestos and subtle innuendos. We were the inmates of a tiny snakepit wherein we whisper intricate scientific and artistic secrets in carefully locked and padded solitary cells, on and off checked upon by those kindly wardens, our editors.

There is simply no bridge between film industry and serious critics. Of course, once in a while a fellow that can spell his name manages to smuggle himself inside those gates guarded by special police. But quickly he will have to assimilate himself completely and forget the spelling or out he goes and for good. But if he stays he'll resent us even more than the happy illiterates who run the business, because of his guilt complexes.

He doesn't need to. It's all one big misunderstanding on both sides. Business has its particular rules—regardless if it deals in onions or in films, raw or exposed. We with our supposedly well-founded demands for better and different motion pictures are the dumb ones because we have applied our knowledge to the product but not to its makers.

Perhaps we ought to criticize the filmmakers daily—like it is being done on the financial pages. We should

become radicals, i.e. go down to the radix, the root of the evils which is not the bad story or the bad director or the inept star. It is the business people who are making and selling these wares.

But who has heard of criticisms of a maker and seller of socks? Who want to sign a profound analysis of the makers and sellers of petrol and still consider himself a critic of the arts?

And if it would be done and the business people would be compelled by force and violence to read our criticisms, to believe them, to study them: what could they do but cry, beat their expensive vests—and keep on doing what they are doing? Even if we ever could convince an artist he would still have to obey the employer who signs his check. And this man in turn will point at the Big Beast, the audience.

FUTILITY OF WRITING

But do the audiences actually justify the lousy pictures thrown at them? All right, the box office takes have been decreasing since the end of the lush days of the war but Hollywood is still well in the chips (which doesn't necessarily include its employees). So there is a large audience that pays cash and thus justifies the dictate of business. It is notorious that the owners of the Hollywood plants come almost exclusively from exhibitors' ranks. Their background is the purchasing, running and selling of cinemas and the contact with the neighbourhood baker who goes to the shows with the candlestick-maker's wife. For this audience they have worked and it has shown its satisfaction by making them rich.

But the film producers have no contact at all with that enormous majority that stays away from picture shows or sees them only sporadically. Among these people are also the few who read serious art criticism including some on motion pictures. The baker and the candlestick-maker's wife don't do much reading together, anyhow.

Here is the nucleus for a much larger audience. As long as films are going to be made by business people only a long drawn-out howl from the excluded masses can convince the smug formula admirers that a switch might mean business of unheard-of dimensions. But who is going to do a howl big enough to be heard by business? These lines here are no howl—just a tiny squeak. The futility of volumes of good writing on motion pictures in almost all languages is evident enough if compared with the motion pictures themselves.

No! I am selling out my illusions. I'll write only for the very few who read this like poetry or a pornographic letter. In other words, it's a private affair. Let's found the Secret Order of the Great Sprocket Hole with a special handshake and high membership fees. Perhaps the mutual recognition will turn out to be fun. Because we are all out in the cold of our hopes while the realists are right inside, in the hell of the satisfaction of making money.



This Farming Business

Film Producers Guild

The Advertising Film—II.

COMMERCIAL DISTRIBUTION

By

K. LOCKHART SMITH

AS I HAVE EXPLAINED PREVIOUSLY, the two-minute advertising films are shown in cinemas because the sponsor pays for screen time. This is called paid distribution. In referring to sponsored films which are successfully exhibited in the cinemas through the normal commercial distribution channels, one must walk warily. Exhibitors, one is assured, shy like two-year-olds from the slightest suggestion of sponsorship. The attitude must be accepted for one is in show business where even the hardest nut has a fancy twist, if not in his shell, at least in his kernel. The real measure of fitness for any film designed to obtain space on the cinema screens is its entertainment value. Obviously, therefore, a film, however funny or absorbing in other ways it may be, which blatantly sets out to sell a product has no

place in a programme which, in spite of the persistent harping of the alleged highbrows, is intended to fill the minds of the audience with induced and out of the ordinary emotions. Books, music, painting, all may trigger the imagination of the gifted, but throughout the ages it is always the spectacle which has been the magic carpet for the masses, and in no other age has spectacle offered more variety than the cinema. In the cinema, the mass mind is tuned to incorporate freedom. It dislikes being suddenly whisked back into the everyday world it has temporarily left. This might be an argument against the two-minute advertising film and it would be valid without convention. The public accepts the convention and there is no resentment, but while it accepts and even enjoys a momentary

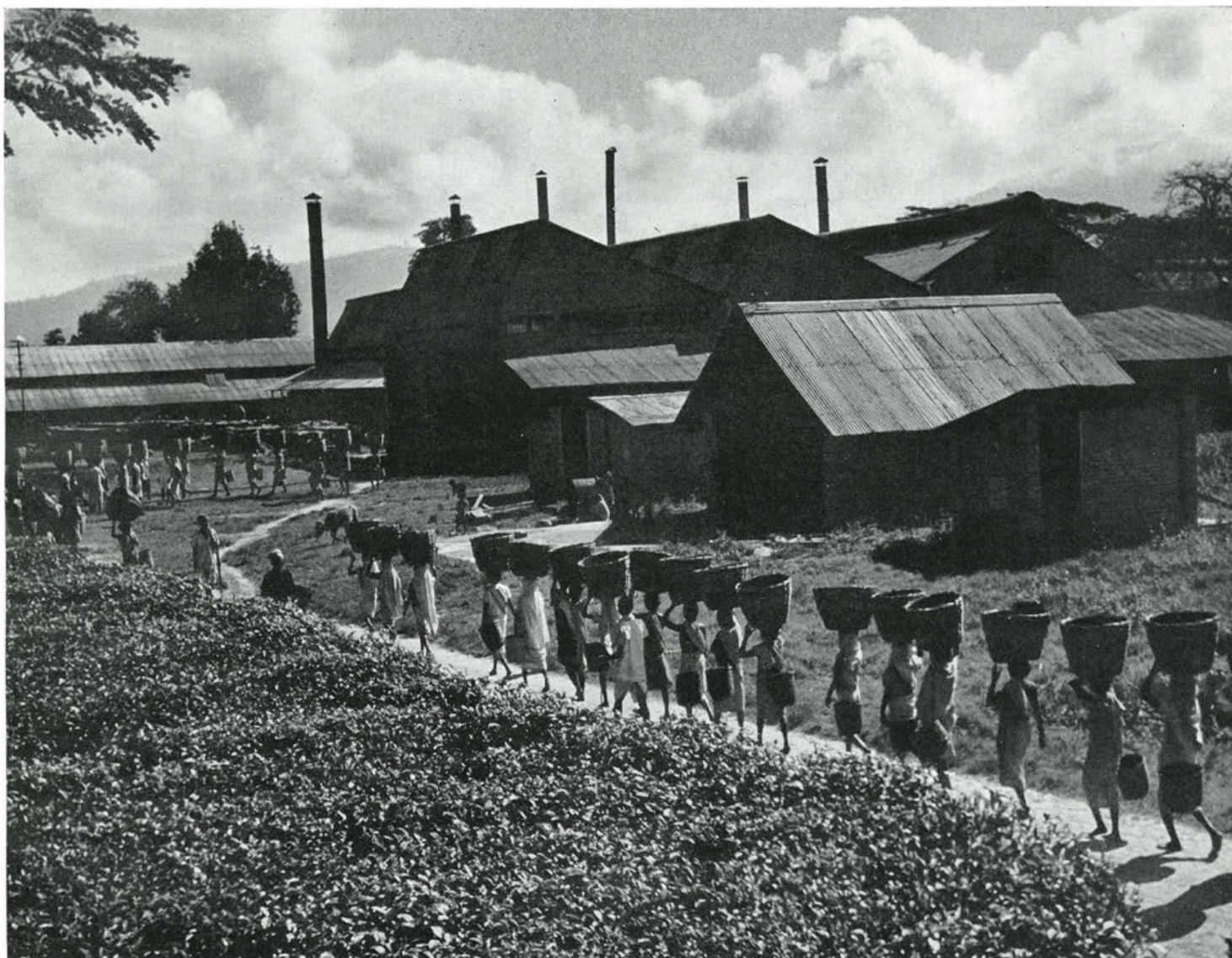
return to earth—witness the interest in newsreels—it must soon be swept into the air again if it is to be happy.

Industrialists are often resentful when the films they sponsor are refused exhibition in the cinemas. Especially when, if they go to the cinema, they often see the most painful travesties of film-making used as supporting material for the feature. Their resentment, which is natural, is often increased by the over optimistic—for one must always be polite—prognostications of the film maker. Many industrial films are ill conceived, being by self interest out of parochial outlook. However, that is another theme, as is the reason why bad supporting films are shown. The real point is that unless the service or product advertised is inherently the entertainment part of the story, there is no prospect of advertising by means of a film for commercial distribution in cinemas.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

This needs enlargement by example. It is always possible to make an entertainment film about an industry. Examples which have had wide distribution in cinemas, in some cases internationally, are:—the Steel Industry (*Steel*)—The Glass Industry (*Looking Through Glass*)—Pottery (*Five Towns*)—Tea (*Tale in a Teacup* and *String of Beads*)—and there are many more such films. These advertise, in the goodwill

sense and the indirect sales sense, British Industries and the things they make. It is seldom that an individual firm within an industry can obtain such free advertising for its products. Sometimes it does happen fortuitously, as when the name of a firm is synonymous with a well known part of an industry. I cite the Wedgwood sequence in *Five Towns* as example; but such lucky breaks are rare. Often such films form part of the Government propaganda for overseas trade, but many are sponsored by the Industry concerned. They are in the first flight as public relations media. They have to be made with full entertainment film quality, technically and dramatically, if they are to succeed and in the present state of the market for supporting films, there is little chance of the sponsor getting back a large proportion of the cost of the film. However, that is seldom important in such cases. The main thing is for the film, with its message which is often not only absorbing but also uplifting, to obtain the widest possible distribution all over the world. Many such films not only contribute to the success of our sales efforts overseas, but also when shown in this country, give strength to our pride of race and achievement. Neither Industry nor the Government have made enough use of the film to achieve the latter. Too many such efforts as have been made have been pedestrian in execution and factual to the exclusion of interest. There is



Tale in a Teacup

Film Producers Guild

glamour in achievement but it is so often missed by the over-emphasis that is nowadays placed on the actual production of the article and the "happy band of brothers" who make it. It is, perhaps, interesting to see how the careful work on the race track is done and how its condition may affect records, but the White City would have a poor attendance if that was all the people were to see on a Saturday afternoon. Strange as it may appear, they do like to see the runners for whom the track has been prepared.

INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS

To get back to the possibility of an individual firm achieving commercial distribution of a film advertising its products or services, it can be done. Obviously some firms, such as the big oil companies, are individually classable as industries. In such huge affairs there is probably little difficulty as their interests are so wide. I refer more specifically here to the firms with interests which can be defined and confined by one word—e.g., Airplanes, Motor Cars, Shoes, etc. Of the first named example there is an almost universal interest in airplanes. As a consequence, it should be possible to make an "entertainment" film on these products. In fact it has been done—*Mosquito* has been shown in over 1,500 theatres in this country alone. Of course, it was aided by the fact that it was shown at the right time, while the exploits of men piloting these famous 'planes were still ringing in the peoples' ears. Further, it is a perfect example of my contention that the product itself must be an inherent part of the entertainment value of the film if advertising is to be achieved. I believe an American film on Kodak also got fairly wide distribution. Another general interest picture as there are few people who do not take "snaps".

In brief, therefore, an individual firm, if its products or services are capable of being made into an entertaining film of general interest, can get an indirect advertising film into the cinemas. Admittedly it is a big "if" in the last sentence and there is probably no chance of naming the firm in the film, but in certain circumstances it is commercially well worth the effort and expenditure. Industry is capable of contributing, through the cinema, to that state of mind which is so aptly put by Sassoon—"Suddenly everyone started to sing and I was filled with such delight as prison'd birds must find in freedom". Industry, through the magic window of the cinema screens, could do much to induce that spirit of adventure which once upon a time inspired this nation of ours before it got bogged down with half-thought-out desires to be wet-nursed from the cradle to the grave and an unholy desire to postpone the advent of the latter *ad nauseam*.

NON-THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTION

By far the greatest use of film made by Industry and Commerce lies within this field. It is right that it should be so for two reasons. Many messages which industrial concerns wish to give are of interest only to certain classes of persons. The film is capable of being a potent sales and advertising weapon, but its effective use is, as I have said, limited to some extent in public cinemas and it is only in the non-theatrical field that a film can at any length advertise, directly and by name, a product or service. We are discussing only the advertising film, as opposed to the instructional film, but in parenthesis it may well be said that a film which explains how to look after a product might



Tale in a Teacup

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well be classed as advertising, for it is designed to ensure satisfaction after sale, which is no small part of successful merchandising. Just as in the cinema, the films shown can be loosely categorised by analogy to novels and light biographies in the literary field, so can the films used in the non-theatrical field be compared to text books, technical articles and last but not least, sales literature of all kinds and copy written for advertisements in papers. It will thus be seen that although the range of subjects is as wide as human imagination in films for the cinema, they are essentially less diverse than the potential and existing use of films outside them. The essential difference is that whatever their form, films shown in public cinemas have only one object—to entertain the general public—while films for non-theatrical use have many objects and are made for many different types of audiences. Still keeping only to the use of films as an advertising medium, here are a few examples which illustrate this point.

Manufacturers of space and water-heating solid fuel burning appliances wanted to impress a knowledge of their goods and services on all who are concerned with building. These people form a scattered section of the community including architects, local government representatives,

builders, merchants and Ministry personnel. A film could obviously tell their story dramatically and memorably. The problem was how to reach their desired audience. The problem was solved in this way. Two railway milk wagons were converted into a showroom and a cinema respectively. This bald statement gives little indication of the beauty of the finished conversion which in design and colour is outstanding. The two wagons visit the main towns all over the country and stay there for varying periods, depending on the size of the population of which they are the centre. Invitations to view the train are issued to all the people the sponsors wish to reach in that locality. The form is that the visitor is first taken through the wagon which is a showroom, where he or she sees all the various products of the manufacturers in appropriate settings and then goes through to the cinema wagon where the film is shown. This film tells the manufacturers' story in an amusing and dramatic way. The combination of display and information being taken to the selected audiences cannot fail forcefully to impress the message on the right people.

IMPRESSING THE DEALER

A well known firm of domestic appliance manufacturers introduced a new washing machine on to the market. This particular firm has always believed very greatly in the power of the film as an aid to sales. A film was produced which told, in a human and entertaining way, the advantages which accrue to a housewife who buys one of the new washing machines. This film was first of all shown to all the manufacturers' dealers throughout the country for two purposes: (i) to show them how best to demonstrate the article, the demonstration forming an essential part of the film; and (ii) to show them the value of a film as a sales aid. The cost of this distribution was, of course, paid for by the manufacturers. As a result of this, dealers have themselves made arrangements to show the film to prospective customers in their own showrooms and, in some cases where the showrooms are not big enough, they have issued invitations to prospective customers and shown the film in a nearby hall. The result has been very satisfactory from the sales point of view and is an example of the use of film as direct advertising for sales purposes.

The manufacturers of a new method of using mechanical agricultural implements have had two films made—one is mainly diagrammatic and shows exactly how the system works and can be taken as an instructional film; the other which is shown with it, is a sales film which employs entertainment technique in the sense that it shows the conversion of the old type of farmer to the new methods by farmers who use them. These films are to be shown to existing audiences of farmers and young farmers clubs all over the country.

Examples could be given of the various uses of films in the non-theatrical field for advertising purposes almost

without end. There is a whole line of technical films such as the well known film on steam raising plant for boiler houses, which has been shown all over the world; the films made by Plastic manufacturers to show the use of their products in industry, and a whole host of films which rely on giving technical information in order to carry their advertising message which is always inherent in the story of the film itself, because it shows the value of the goods and services which are offered to the particular audiences for which the film has been made.

In the non-theatrical field, the method of distribution—in other words, the method of reaching the desired audiences—is always a necessary part of any planning. Usually, it must be realised that distribution costs are appreciable in addition to the costs of production. Therefore, as in any other advertising campaign, the total costs have to be weighed against the potential success of the campaign in selling goods or services. The two main methods of distribution are to invited audiences or to existing audiences, and examples above show two methods of reaching invited audiences and one method of reaching existing audiences. It should also be remembered that many films are in their first flight shown to selected audiences and thereafter, through library distribution, are shown to existing audiences for many years. Any film which gives technical information on engineering or chemical subjects, even if it is an indirect advertising film, is welcome for showing at technical schools and colleges where the interests of the students approximate the subject matter of the film.

Briefly, then, advertising which industry can obtain in cinemas must be indirect, except for paid distribution by means of two-minute films. It is none the less useful and should receive serious consideration in any public relations or advertising campaign. Many firms are proving the truth of the last part of the old saying about casting bread upon the waters.

If a more direct approach is necessary and especially if the object of the advertising film is to initiate an immediate and active response from the audience, then the correct outlets in the non-theatrical field must be sought.

Whether it be an indirect or direct advertising film which is required is a question which can only be determined by reference to the particular problem, but there is one essential to every kind of advertising film. It must appeal to the audience for which it is intended. In any form, it is a presentation and much of its success depends on the method of presenting the product, process or service. Seldom is the dull photographic record as successful as the product of a creative team of artists and technicians who value and understand the power of the film medium and realise that at its best, it is at once the most flexible and the most powerful medium for mass or individual persuasion available to industry to-day.

A FORGOTTEN CRITIC

Roger Manvell concludes the survey which he began in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND of Vachel Lindsay's book "The Art of Moving Picture," first published in 1915

"EDISON IS THE NEW GUTENBERG. He has invented the new-printing", wrote Vachel Lindsay, anticipating by some thirty years Cohen-Seat's far-reaching prophecy of the uses to which the film will be put by future civilisations.* He realised that a new generation was growing up which would tend to be more picture-conscious than literate.

"Here then comes the romance of the photoplay. A tribe that has thought in words since the days that it worshipped Thor and told legends of the cunning of the tongue of Loki, suddenly begins to think in pictures. The leaders of the people, and of culture, scarcely know the photoplay exists. But in the remote villages the players mentioned in this work are as well known and as fairly understood in their general psychology as any candidates for president bearing political messages. There is many a babe in the proletariat not over four years old who has received more pictures into its eye than it has had words enter its ear. The young couple go with their first-born and it sits gaping on its mother's knee. Often the images are violent and unseemly, a chaos of rawness and squirm, but scattered through the experience is a delineation of the world". (pp. 185-186.)

Lindsay's style, florid, gossipy, always enthusiastic and often poetically rhetorical, is a mask behind which his constant perceptiveness operates. The book is full of enormous irrelevancies, long illustrations which illuminate his own meaning for himself but obscure the issues he is trying to prove at a period when virtually no one had begun to express these ideas on paper. He is not easy to quote because he seldom summarises his position: the significance of what he is saying emerges during the course of his long and fluent paragraphs.

SILENT DEFINITION

We have already seen how he thinks the Photoplay of Action is parallel to sculpture-in-motion. The opposite kind of film, the film of intimacy and personal emotion, he compares to painting-in-motion. In the course of this comparison he suddenly commits himself to a definition of the silent motion picture.

"All motion pictures might be characterized as space measured without sound, plus time measured without sound". (p. 106.)

He thinks of the movement in a given intimate shot as a movement of significant patterns:

* See SIGHT AND SOUND No. 61, Spring 1947, p. 18.

"Suppose it is a humorous characterization of comfortable family life, founded on some Dutch Little Master. The picture measures off its spaces in harmony. The triangle occupied by the little child's dress is in definite relation to the triangle occupied by the mother's costume. To these two patterns the space measured off by the boy's figure is adjusted, and all of them are as carefully related to the shapes cut out of the background by the figures. No matter how the characters move about in the photoplay, these pattern shapes should relate to one another in a definite design. The exact tone value of each one and their precise nearness or distance to one another have a deal to do with the final effect".

"We go to the photoplay to enjoy right and splendid picture-motions, to feel a certain thrill when the pieces of kaleidoscope glass slide into new places. Instead of moving on straight lines, as they do in the mechanical toy, they progress in strange curves that are part of the very shapes into which they fall". (p. 107.)

Lindsay later in the book considers some of the distinctions between the film and the drama. He comments on the theatrical producer who attempts to bring a technique based on dialogue into a medium based on visual emphasis:

"When the veteran stage-producer as a beginning photoplay producer tries to give us a dialogue in the motion pictures, he makes it so dull no one follows. He does not realize that his camera-born opportunity to magnify persons and things instantly, to interweave them as actors on one level, to alternate scenes at the slightest whim, are the big substitutes for dialogue. By alternating scenes rapidly, flash after flash: cottage, field, mountain-top, field, mountain-top, cottage, we have a conversation between three places rather than three persons. By alternating the picture of a man and the check he is forging, we have his soliloquy. When two people talk to each other, it is by lifting and lowering objects rather than their voices. The collector presents a bill: the adventurer shows him the door. The boy plucks a rose: the girl accepts it. Moving objects, not moving lips, make the words of the photoplay". (p. 161.)

The climax of a sequence, he points out, must be achieved visually and not by a screen-full of words:

"The climax of a motion picture scene cannot be one word or fifty words. As has been discussed in connection with *Cabiria*, the crisis must be an action sharper than

any that has gone before in organic union with a tableau more beautiful than any that has preceded: the breaking of the tenth wave upon the sand. Such remnants of pantomimic dialogue as remain in the main chase of the photoplay film are but guide-posts in the race toward the goal. They should not be elaborate toll-gates of plot, to be laboriously lifted and lowered while the horses stop, mid-career". (p. 162.)

SECOND PLACE

Like Pudovkin, he puts the actor in second place to the director of a film. The actor is raw material which the director moulds as he wishes, along with the sets and properties of his film:

"The stage-production depends most largely upon the power of the actors, the movie show upon the genius of the producer. The performers and the dumb objects are on equal terms in his paint-buckets. The star-system is bad for the stage because the minor parts are smothered and the situations distorted to give the favorite an orbit. It is bad for the motion pictures because it obscures the producer. While the leading actor is entitled to his glory, as are all the actors, their mannerisms should not overshadow the latest inspirations of the creator of the films". (p. 166-7.)

Lindsay realises that it is important for a film to be conceived as such from the beginning, and to depend as little as possible on inspirations which originally found their natural forms of expression in the drama or the novel. The realisation of this, he says, will help to destroy the bitter rivalry existing at the time he was writing between the theatre and the cinema:

"The photoplays of the future will be written from the foundations for the films. The soundest actors, photographers, and producers will be those who emphasize the points wherein the photoplay is unique. What is adapted to complete expression in one art generally secures but half expression in another. The supreme photoplay will give us things that have been but half expressed in all other mediums allied to it". (p. 169.)

SOUND

The problems of sound interested Lindsay to a certain extent. He had seen *Cabiria* and *Birth of a Nation* shown with their special orchestral scores. He was aware that the time would come when films would be linked technically with reproduced sound, and he had seen one or two inadequate demonstrations of motion-pictures synchronised more or less with very imperfect gramophone recordings.

As regards film music, he realised that it would be necessary for the director to bring the composer into his unit, but that it would be dangerous to allow the composer to carry the main burden of the film along by covering up its weaknesses with over-powering music:

"If there is something more to be done on the part of the producer to make the film a telling one, let it be a

deeper study of the pictorial arrangement, with the tones more carefully balanced, the sculpture vitalized. This is certainly better than to have a raw thing bullied through with a music-programme, furnished to bridge the weak places in the construction. A picture should not be released till it is completely thought out. A producer with this goal before him will not have the time or brains to spare to write music that is as closely and delicately related to the action as the action is to the background. And unless the tunes are at one with the scheme they are an intrusion. Perhaps the moving picture maker has a twin brother almost as able in music, who possesses the faculty of subordinating his creations to the work of his more brilliant coadjutor". (p. 190.)

It was more difficult however for Lindsay to see any place for recorded dialogue in films. The exaggerated enunciation required at this period to make recorded speech clear suggested to him an evil which the fine qualities of sound-recording to-day have not been able to invalidate, though the problem now lies in the scripting and acting of films rather than in technical faults. The sound film he calls the Phonoplay, a fine word to apply to the more verbose of dialogue-controlled talkies.

"The phonoplay can quite possibly reach some divine goal, but it will be after the speaking powers of the phonograph excel the photographing powers of the reel, and then the pictures will be brought in as comment and ornament to the speech. The pictures will be held back by the phonograph as long as it is more limited in its range. The pictures are at present freer and more versatile without it. If the phonoplay is ever established, since it will double the machinery, it must needs double its prices. It will be the illustrated photograph, in a more expensive theatre". (p. 196.)

CENSORSHIP

There are several other points that Vachel Lindsay raises. Censorship, he thinks, should be left in the hands of ordinary public opinion. Educational films, he foresees, will be increasingly introduced into school and colleges. But I would rather end this anthology of Lindsay's views with a note of his on the *avant-garde* films which he feels should be made to match the work of the Imagist poets (Pound, Aldington, Lawrence and others) who were then becoming fashionable. With magnificent dash he forecasts the art films which we are making now, and the film societies which show them!

"Read some of the poems of the people listed above, then imagine the same moods in the films. Imagist photoplays would be Japanese prints taking on life, animated Japanese paintings, Pompeian mosaics in kaleidoscopic but logical succession, Beardsley drawings made into actors and scenery, Greek vase-paintings in motion".

"Scarcely a photoplay but hints at the Imagists in one scene. Then the illusion is lost in the next turn of the reel. Perhaps it would be a sound observance to confine this form of motion picture to a half reel or quarter reel, just as the Imagist poem is generally a half or quarter page. A series of them could fill a special evening". (p. 240.)

ANOTHER FORGOTTEN CRITIC

By

C. DENIS PEGGE

IN RECENT ISSUES OF SIGHT AND SOUND Dr. Roger Manvell has reviewed Vachel Lindsay's "The Art of the Moving Picture", first published in America in 1915. At that early period everyone was aware of the popularity of the cinema, but—as Dr. Manvell comments—few "yet realised that the artist as distinct from the showman had any real inspiration to derive from working in such a medium". Another critical work on film art published in America in 1916 is worthy of serious consideration—"The Photoplay: a psychological study" by Hugo Münsterberg. Less exuberant, "The Photoplay" has, perhaps even more than Vachel Lindsay's book, a present as well as a historical interest. Although there is no evidence that Pudovkin was aware of Münsterberg's publication, "The Photoplay" suggests here and there the montage theory of film that was put forward in so masterly a manner in "Film Technique" written in 1928. But what chiefly renders Münsterberg's study provocative and interesting is his psychological approach.

The son of a successful lumber merchant, Hugo Münsterberg was born in Danzig in June, 1863. He died in his lecture room at Radcliffe College, America, in December, 1916. His teaching career began at Freiburg, where he had a psychological laboratory in his own house. In 1892—through the influence of William James—he was put in charge of the psychological laboratory at Harvard University, and later became chairman of the department of philosophy at that University. He was also Harvard exchange professor at the University of Berlin during the years 1910-11. He wrote many books, both in German and English, including "Psychology and Industrial Efficiency" and "Psychology: General and Applied", and a philosophical work called "The Eternal Values".

He did not become seriously interested in the potentialities of the film until late in his life. We are told in the biography written by his daughter Margaret Münsterberg that Annette Kellerman's mermaid pranks in *Neptune's Daughter* "not only delighted him, but opened his eyes to the distinctive character and possibilities of the photoplay". During the summer of 1915 he spent many hours in motion-picture houses. A popular article by him called "Why we go to the movies" was printed in the December, 1915, issue of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. In April of the following year his book "The Photoplay" was published. He also gave public lectures on the psychology of the photoplay. While he was primarily interested in the film as an art, he was fully aware of its possibilities as an educational medium. He prepared a series of pictures called *Testing the mind*, employing in them methods used in his laboratory for testing attention, memory, constructive imagination, and so on. These were included in one of the Pictographs of the Paramount Company. He began to work out means for presenting history on the screen.

The moving picture world welcomed the championship of the Psychologist-Philosopher. With Winthrop Ames, E. Winthrop Sargent, Leon Dadmun and Miss Salita Solano, he was one of the five judges in a public newspaper competition awarding prizes for the best scenarios. He read the thirty scenarios sifted out from the great number of submitted scripts, "and shook his head in wonder at the poor quality"! During the last weeks of his life he attended the "movie ball" at which the prizes were distributed.

OBJECT AND IMPRESSION

In the introduction to his book Münsterberg traces the technical advances that have made the photoplay possible, and the inner development that has led to the evolution of an art which—he emphasises at the start—is quite distinct from the art of the theatre, each art being "perfectly valuable" in itself. His inquiry into this new art is to be in the first place psychological, and in the second, aesthetic, both aspects of the inquiry intimately connected.

By a reference to the stereoscope he exemplifies the difference between an object of our knowledge and of our impression. In the photoplay, movements and other means "strongly maintain our immediate impression of depth". He quotes Vachel Lindsay's description of some moving pictures as "sculpture in motion". "Flatness is an objective part of the technical physical arrangements, but not a feature of that which we really see in the performance of the photoplay. We are there in the midst of a three-dimensional world. . . . We have reality with all its true dimensions; and yet it keeps the fleeting, passing surface suggestion without true depth and fulness, as different from a mere picture as from a mere stage performance. It brings our mind into a peculiar complex state; and we shall see that this plays a not unimportant part in the mental make-up of the whole photoplay".

Modern laboratory psychology, says Münsterberg, shows that in life "the perception of movement is an independent experience which cannot be reduced to a simple seeing of a series of different positions. A characteristic content of consciousness must be added to such a series of visual impressions". He describes various laboratory experiments which demonstrate this. In the photoplay, as well as depth "we find that the movement too is perceived but that the eye does not receive the true impressions of movement. It is only a suggestion of movement, and the idea of motion is to a high degree the product of our own reaction. . . . We see things distant and moving, but we furnish to them more than we receive; we create the depth and the continuity through our mental mechanism".

Münsterberg next indicates the peculiar power of the photoplay for directing the attention, comparing this power with that of the theatre. "Of all internal functions which create the meaning of the world around us, the most central is the attention. The chaos of surrounding impressions is organized into a real cosmos of experience by our selection of that which is significant and of consequence. This is true for life and stage alike. . . . In practical life we discriminate between voluntary and involuntary attention. We call it voluntary if we approach the impressions with an idea in our mind as to what we want to focus our attention on. . . . It is quite different with the involuntary attention. The guiding influence here comes from without. The cue for the focussing of our attention lies in the events which we perceive. What is loud and shining and unusual attracts our involuntary attention. . . .

"To be sure, the perceptions which force themselves on our involuntary attention may get their motive power from our own reactions. Everything which appeals to our natural instincts, everything which stirs up hope or fear, enthusiasm or indignation, or any emotional excitement will get control of our attention. . . . In our daily activity voluntary and involuntary attention are always intertwined. Our life is a great compromise between that which our voluntary attention aims at and that which the aims of the surrounding world force on our involuntary attention".

He continues: "How does the theatre performance differ in this respect from life? Might we not say that voluntary attention is eliminated from the sphere of art. . . . If we really enter into the spirit of the play, our attention is constantly drawn in accordance with the intentions of the producers". The speech and movement of the actors on the stage push the attention hither and thither. Movement without speech, gesture and pantomime, may also sometimes be very effective. "Again, the quick action, the unusual action, the repeated action, the unexpected action, the action with strong outer effect, will force itself on our mind and unbalance the mental equilibrium".

The spoken word is lacking in the photoplay. This is sometimes inserted through "leaders" into the flow of the pictures. "But", Münsterberg comments, "such help by the writing on the wall is, after all, extraneous to the original character of the photoplay. With the exception of words, no means for drawing the attention which is effective on the theatre stage is lost in the photoplay. . . . By the absence of speech everything is condensed, the whole rhythm is quickened, a greater pressure of time is applied, and through that the accents become sharper and the emphasis more powerful for the attention. Also the form of the moving picture intensifies the impression made by those who move toward the foreground. The theatre stage is broadest near the footlights and becomes narrower toward the background; the moving picture stage is narrowest in front and becomes wider toward the background. . . . Whatever comes to the foreground therefore gains strongly in relative importance over its surroundings. Moving away from the camera means a reduction much greater than a mere stepping to the background on the theatre stage".

The devices used on the theatre stage for focussing interest can according to Münsterberg "be carried to a much stronger climax of efficiency by the unlimited means of the moving pictures". The formal arrangement, the

composition of the succeeding pictures, has again possibilities "superior to those of the solid theatre stage"; and Münsterberg notes that composition in the moving pictures is fixed and the same for every member of the audience.

In life there is a reverse side to attention. "While the attended impression becomes more vivid, all the other impressions become less clear, less distinct, less detailed. . . . As we are passing along the street we see something in the shop window and as soon as it stirs up our interest, our body adjusts itself, we stop, we fixate it, we get more of the detail in it, the lines become sharper, and while it impresses us more vividly than before the street around us has lost its vividness and clearness". This brings Münsterberg to one of the most important devices of the photoplay, the "close-up". "That one nervous hand which feverishly grasps the deadly weapon can suddenly for the space of a breath or two become enlarged and be alone visible on the screen, while everything else has really faded into darkness. . . . The close-up has objectivied in our world of perception our mental act of attention.

"Have we not reached by this analysis of the close-up," he continues, "a point very near to that to which the study of depth perception and movement perception was leading? We saw that the moving pictures give us the plastic world and the moving world, and that nevertheless the depth and the motion in it are not real, unlike the depth and motion of the stage. We find now that the reality of action in the photoplay in still another respect lacks objective independence, because it yields to our subjective play of attention. Wherever our attention becomes focussed on a special feature, the surrounding adjusts itself, eliminates everything in which we are not interested, and by the close-up heightens the vividness of that on which our mind is concentrated. It is as if that outer world were woven into our mind and were shaped not through its own laws but by the acts of attention".

Subsidiary to the act of attention are other mental processes. Münsterberg refers to the cut-back—or flash-back—as the act of remembering, and to what may be termed a flash-forward in the pictures in anticipation of the future as an act of the imagination. The photoplay is not tied to a temporal order, and again "the screen may produce not only what we remember or imagine but what the persons in the play see in their own minds". Through its rapid and intertwining scenes the photoplay can provide omnipresence. "Events which are far distant from one another so that we could not be physically present at all of them at the same time are fusing in our field of vision, just as they are brought together in our consciousness".

Other means peculiar to the photoplay are described. A series of scenes can be cut off in the service of suggestion—in a way they cannot be on the theatre stage. Through the changing pictures we may be made conscious of the emotions of characters, either subjectively or objectively, even to the extent of being able to perceive fantasies and dreams. Münsterberg notes the possibilities of what we would now term types in place of professional actors. "The emotional expression in the photoplays is therefore often more natural in the small rôles which the outsiders play than in the chief parts of the professionals who feel that they must outdo nature". He describes effects to be obtained through cutting, which anticipate so brilliant a modern experimentalist as Mr. Len Lye. "Take the case that we want to produce an effect of trembling. We might use the

pictures as the camera has taken them, sixteen in a second. But in reproducing them on the screen we change their order. After giving the first four pictures we go back to picture 3, then give 4, 5, 6, and return to 5, then 6, 7, 8, and go back to 7, and so on". He then goes on to anticipate effects by camera movement later to be developed by the German cinema. "Or we demand from our camera a still more complex service. We put the camera itself on a slightly rocking support and then every point must move in strange curves and every motion takes an uncanny whirling character. The content still remains the same as under normal conditions, but the changes in the formal presentation give to the mind of the spectator unusual sensations which produce a new shading of the emotional background."

His æsthetic outlook—conveyed in the second portion of the book—may be briefly indicated. "A work of art may and must start from something which awakens in us the interests of reality and which contains traits of reality, and to that extent it cannot avoid some imitation. But it becomes art just in so far as it overcomes reality, stops imitating and leaves the imitated reality behind it. The work of art shows us the things and events perfectly complete in themselves, freed from all connections which lead beyond their own limits, that is, in perfect isolation". He writes that "only in contact with an isolated experience can we feel perfectly happy". In confronting the work of art our attitude must therefore never become what it would be in the sphere of practical action, where there is "a continuous striving", where "everything is a stimulus to new wishes, a source of new uneasiness which longs for new satisfaction in the next and again in the next thing. . . ." He implies that art "awakens plenty of impulses" but "offers satisfaction to all these impulses in itself". It "contains in its own midst everything which answers the questions, which brings the desires to rest". This it does not through omission but through a resolution of all elements, through a perfect self-agreement and unity. Arisen in the turmoil of a technical age, "created by its very technique", yet the photoplay is more than any other art "destined to overcome outer nature by the free and joyful play of the mind".

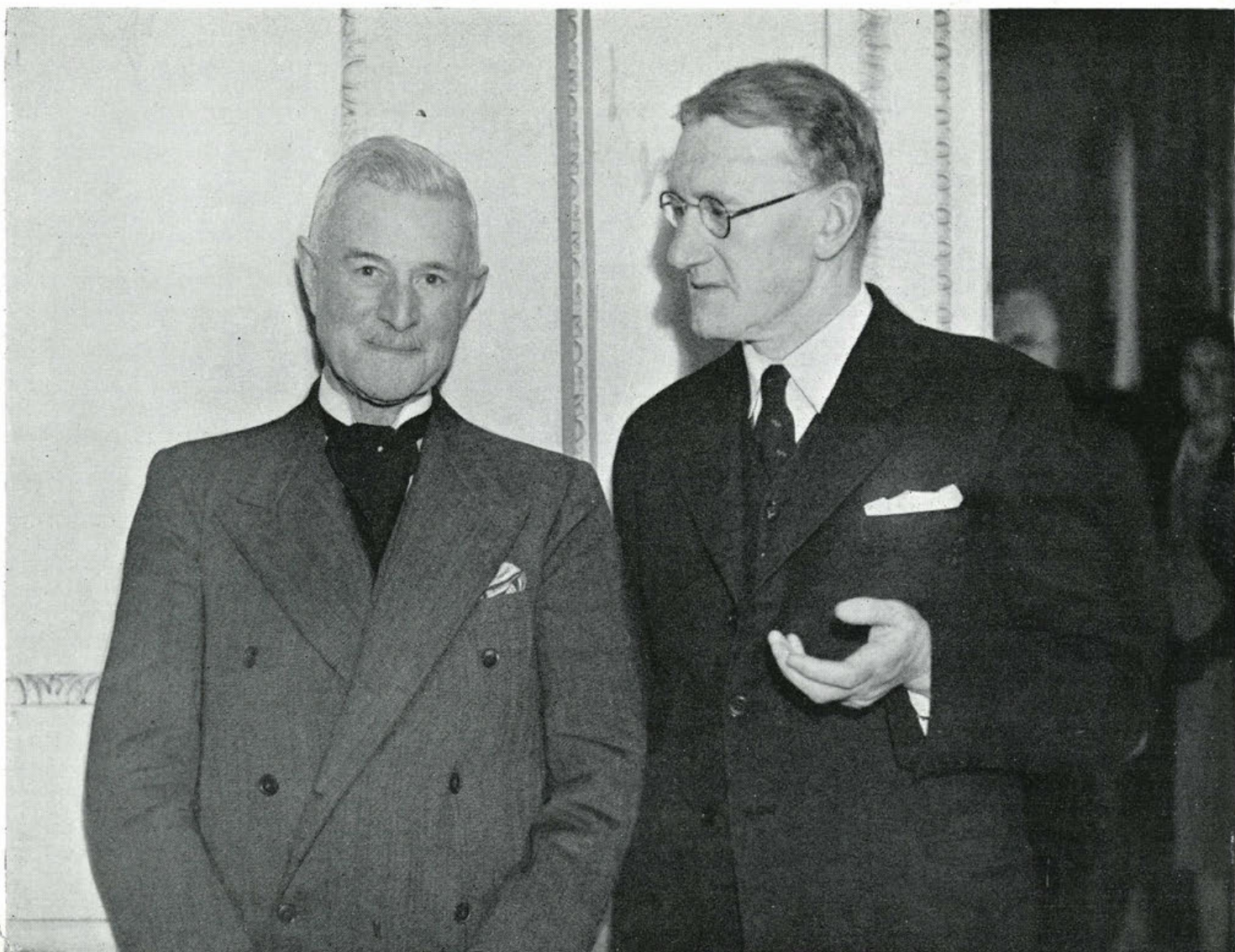
Münsterberg is a visual purist. "The photoplay of the day after to-morrow will surely be freed from all elements which are not really pictures". While objecting to "leaders", he considers as perfectly justified the introduction of letters, newspaper clippings and so on in a pictorial close-up.

He writes: "Those who, like Edison, had a technical, scientific, and social but not a genuine æsthetic point of view in the development of the moving pictures naturally asked themselves whether this optical imitation of the drama might not be improved by an acoustical imitation too. Then the idea would be to connect the kinematoscope with the phonograph and to synchronise them so completely that with every visible movement of the lips the audible sound of the words would leave the diaphragm of the apparatus. All who devoted themselves to this problem had considerable difficulties and when their ventures proved practical failures with the theatre audiences, they were inclined to blame their inability to solve the technical problem perfectly. They were not aware that the real difficulty was an æsthetic and internal one. . . . A photoplay cannot gain but only lose if its visual purity is destroyed. . . ."

"It is quite different with accompanying music", he continues, ". . . the need of such a more or less melodious and even more or less harmonious accompaniment has always been felt, and even the poorest substitute for decent music has been tolerated, as seeing long reels in a darkened house without any tonal accompaniment fatigues and ultimately irritates an average audience. The music relieves the tension and keeps the attention awake. . . . The music does not tell a part of the plot and does not replace the pictures as words would do, but simply reinforces the emotional setting. It is quite probable, when the photoplay has found its æsthetic recognition, that composers will begin to write . . . with the same enthusiasm with which they write in other musical forms". Of sound effects he says: "In so far as they are simply heightening the emotional tension, they may enter into the music itself. . . ."

Many writers on the film during the silent film period have stressed the illusion of reality conveyed through black-and-white moving photographs. Münsterberg makes many statements and counter-statements on the representation of reality. "It is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul. The mind develops memory ideas and imaginative ideas; in the moving pictures they become reality". When speaking of colour film—to which on the whole he objects ("the colors are almost as detrimental as the voices")—he writes: "We become aware that the unique task of the photoplay can be fulfilled only by a far-reaching disregard of reality. The real human persons and the real landscapes must be left behind, and, as we saw, must be transformed into pictorial suggestions only. We must be strongly conscious of their pictorial unreality in order that that wonderful play of our inner experiences may be realised on the screen. . . . On the other hand", he continues, "the producer must be careful to keep sufficiently in contact with reality, as otherwise the emotional interests upon which the whole play depends would be destroyed. We must not take the people to be real, but we must link them with all the feelings and associations which we would connect with real men". He describes the effect of a photoplay on a member of the audience, as the feeling of "passing through life with a sharper accent which stirs his personal energies". Perhaps Münsterberg expresses himself most characteristically when he says: "We have reality . . . and yet it keeps the fleeting, passing, surface suggestion. . . ."

Nearly everyone will agree that art cannot be imitation; but they may yet agree that there may be the closest possible illusion of reality in the elements out of which—through selection and arrangement—a work of art is composed. The direction of attention which Münsterberg describes is tantamount to a direction of consciousness. The film medium can cause a stream in consciousness in the same way as a stream in consciousness is caused in us in ordinary life—from outer events and the subjective processes of the mind. This use of the medium was chiefly developed in the silent film. But the addition of sound-track to film does not in itself prevent a continuation of that development. These thoughts may arise for the present-day reader of Münsterberg's book. He testifies as a psychologist to a very close kinship between mental processes and a certain mode of film art.



The late Mr. James Montgomery (left) and Dr. Richard Hayes.

IRISH CENSORSHIP—OR FIGHTING FOR CLEANER CINEMA

By

JOHN GERRARD

WHEN CINEMA developed from its naive infancy into a most wilful adolescence responsible authorities throughout the world had to evolve a form of censorship, and in Ireland the duty was entrusted to the various corporations and county councils.

This highly unsatisfactory system lasted until 1923 when Dail Eireann passed the Censorship of Films Act, ruling that a single official should be appointed as central authority subject to an Appeal Board of nine commissioners.

The Censor is left almost entirely to his own discretion, Clause 7 (2), (4) empowering him to reject a complete picture or require cuts to be made in a picture according as he is of the opinion that such picture or some part thereof is unfit for general exhibition in public by reason of its being indecent, obscene, or blasphemous, or because the

exhibition thereof in public would tend to inculcate principles contrary to public morality or would be otherwise subversive of public morality.

The last phrase is a masterpiece of legal foresight, being so vague that it might be exploited to cover almost anything!

Fees for censoring have been fixed at 3d. per 25 feet or part thereof for shorts and features, while straight educational, travel or topical films are charged at 3d. per 50 feet. Sound films must be accompanied by a dialogue script and it is also necessary to furnish the exploitation sheet or, in some cases, the full range of publicity.

If parts of a film are judged to be objectionable the Censor issues a "Memo of Exceptions" indicating the parts which must be cut in order to obtain the certificate. In the

case of *Gone With the Wind* the cuts were so heavy that the renters refused at first to accept them and the public had almost given up hope before it was released.

When a whole film is rejected the person concerned may, on payment of 5s., obtain a copy of the report. To make an appeal it is necessary to lodge £5 with the secretary, the money being forfeited if the Board upholds the decision. The Board has not the power to grant a certificate but may direct the Censor to do so.

A rejected picture can be re-edited and submitted in a new guise. It is also possible that a special certificate may be granted permitting its exhibition in certain places or under special conditions or in the presence of certain classes of persons.

Mr. James Montgomery, first holder of the office, took the Ten Commandments as his code and swung into a full-blooded battle against the low standards prevailing at the time. Of the 1,307 features submitted to him in 1924 he rejected 104 and administered severe cuts to 166.

His stand incurred the wrath of the producers, who sent over delegates to demand more lenient treatment. Both the Censor and the Chairman of the Appeal Board, confident of public support, asserted that they would rather have no films than the ones which had been banned—films which presented American youth as anti-social and anti-Christian. The answer was a threat to boycott the Irish market.

However, the incident had excited wide interest and succeeded in shocking Americans into realising that Hollywood's portrayals of social degradation were seriously injuring the prestige of their nation as well as encouraging corruption among themselves. The *Montreal Daily Star* commented "Most Americans—even including motion-picture fans—will secretly applaud the Irish Censor's refusal to surrender to the 'box office' standards. They may even go further and agree that an 8 per cent. cull-out of the film 'rots and spots' could be effected with benefit and advantage over here". It was the beginning of a campaign which resulted in the establishment of the Hays Office, thus stemming the flow of immoral films which might have prevented the new art from aspiring to the comparatively high standard at which it now aims.

Back in Ireland Montgomery was being urged by Catholic newspapers to enforce even stricter censorship; in his own words, he was "between the Devil and the Holy See"!

Adding to his difficulties came the "Talkie" films and, as his little theatre was not equipped for sound, he could only issue certificates stamped "Plot and Sound not Censored". Local bodies organised to take the law into their own hands and even resorted to violent methods to prevent the screening of certain films. But order was restored in the following year, 1930, when the Amendment of the Censorship Act provided for the submission of dialogue scripts to the Censor.

Up to this the Censor had been very little concerned with politics, though in the early twenties it had been deemed advisable to avoid the screening of the Union Jack or members of the British Royal Family. The outbreak of World War II and the declaration of Irish neutrality made necessary the Emergency Powers Order dated September, 1939, directing that he should not grant a certificate to a picture which, in his opinion, was prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order; or prejudicial to the preservation of the State; or to cause offence to the people of a friendly foreign nation. As a result the supply of films was reduced to a trickle and third-rate features were re-

tained for weeks on end. There was quite an avalanche when the order was revoked!

On the death of Mr. Montgomery in 1941 the appointment was given to the present holder, Dr. Richard Hayes, who is also a director at the famous Abbey Theatre.

Dr. Hayes bases his decision on "the simple moral code and the principles on which civilisation and family life are built. Any ignoring of these or any defiance of them in a picture bans it straightaway as far as I am concerned".

Definitely banned subjects are lascivious dancing, Birth Control and Abortion. In Ireland marriage is still regarded as a long-term contract (thus scaring away many a youth till he is middle-aged!) and the Censor is expected to ensure that the ideal is not tarnished by light or frivolous treatment on the screen. He has been severely criticised for admitting films dealing with Divorce, but argues that they illustrate a life which is almost on an entirely different plane to that existing in this country. However, he takes good care that none of them condone or act as an incentive to it; quite recently he insisted that the distributors should alter a title from *I Want a Divorce* to *The Tragedy of Divorce*. With regard to crime and other sordid themes a wide latitude is allowed but the same principles apply—evil must not be presented in the guise of good and must not tend to be either debasing or subversive.

Of course, the Censor's task has become less arduous as the distributors learned to appreciate what was considered desirable for the Irish public. In addition, he was provided in 1945 with more spacious premises in a quiet tree-softened street beside the limpid, easy-flowing Grand Canal. A brightly modern red-brick building contains a neat auditorium with accommodation for trade representatives and a formidable desk behind which "his nibs" watches with eagle eye. More recently still the cinema was equipped with the very latest in projection equipment.

During 1948 Dr. Hayes sat through 1,642 films and rejected only twenty (drama, variety and one trailer) though 188 were passed subject to cutting. Fifteen went before the Appeal Board and it speaks well for his judgment that the members confirmed the decision in seven cases while passing six with cuts; two were reversed.

The reports show the main reasons to be the glamourising of divorce, marital infidelity, indecent dances and mental or physical brutality. And so Irish eyes were denied such spectacles as *White Unicorn*, *The Flame*, *Good-time Girl*, *If Winter Comes*, *Lulu Belle*, *Daisy Kenyon*, *Look Before You Love* and *The Voice of the Turtle*.

Irish Censorship may seem to be of a somewhat dictatorial nature but it will be noted that it is adequately controlled by an Appeal Board whose members provide a representative cross-section of responsible people. Having struggled so vigorously for independence, Irishmen appreciate that true liberty is a delicate bloom which requires careful attention to achieve full beauty. Each individual must preserve his self-respect and be concerned for that of his fellow men.

When Censor Montgomery made his stand in 1924 he knew the bulk of the nation supported him. The victory and its results showed how every community, however small, can influence to the good this most complex (and dangerous!) of modern arts, the Cinema.

Incidentally, though there is no political censorship, Dr. Hayes admits with a quiet smile that "anything advocating Communism or presenting it in an unduly favourable light gets the knife"!

AMERICAN BLUES

By

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

*They have limbs, so they run, while crushing the laurel
heedlessly underfoot . . . They taste the grapes, yet do not
see the vine leaves hanging there . . .*

THEY HOUND AN ARTIST like Charlie Chaplin (most recently from the floor of the U.S. Senate, where his deportation was urged) and organize pressure to boycott his films (like that of the Catholic Church here, which instituted pickets against *Monsieur Verdoux*), causing Chaplin to withdraw *Verdoux* from further circulation because theatres would no longer book his film. Thus, one of the greatest comic spirits since Molière is treated like a criminal. They accepted him when he made them laugh but his own Swiftian laughter frightened them. "He is against war, against our competitive society, against our most deep-rooted feelings—off with his head!" As a clown, a *pagliaccio*, yes—as a fellow human being, as a friend, no. What real appreciation did they ever have for his genius? The totem and tabu of sacred shibboleths in modern society remains as primitive and fixed as the bogeyman of the Swahili. The difference is one of kind, not of degree.

As this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND goes to press, word has just come that the French Association of Cinema Critics has proposed that Chaplin receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

They ruthlessly cut all of Stroheim's films since *Blind Husbands* (the public has never seen a complete Stroheim film since that first early one) not to mention what they did to Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico!*—and now the Chambre du Tribunal in Paris has ruled (in the case of Marcel Carné and Jacques Prevert *vs.* Pathé over the cuts made in *Les Enfants du Paradis*) that the author and director of a film have the moral right to the artistic integrity of their work. Currently, the producers of *Colonel Blimp* are suing the American distributors of this film for "condensing" it the way Pathé "condensed" *Les Enfants du Paradis*. What possible effect these two test cases may have on future films remains to be seen. *Mais, alors*, what of past damage?

Apropos Stroheim, the stupendous flop of the four million dollar *Arch of Triumph*, which took two and a half years to make, and on which, according to the publicity releases, thirty times as much film was shot as was finally used (certainly no tribute to director Lewis Milestone) must rank as one of the major *gaucheries* of Hollywood. Even in the most idiotically exaggerated publicity blurbs about Stroheim's alleged extravagant shooting did he ever take so long, spend and overshoot so much. But Stroheim's unique individuality led him to become Hollywood's first and most celebrated scapegoat, the victim of the American film capital's first adolescent

stirrings of a "guilt-complex", of "righteous indignation" and similar moral and economic hypocrisies. Today, Milestone overshoots 30 times and no one calls him extravagant. That *Arch of Triumph* was an horrendous bore and that *Foolish Wives* and *The Merry Widow* (even in their execrably mutilated forms) were masterworks and great popular successes, is not besides the point, either.

NO TALENT HERE

What prompts these gratuitous animadversions is the sad fact that the past quarter saw no new, original American film work . . . no films in which the dramatic or comic trajectory did not lose altitude before the end; no films of weights and oppositions, having counterpoint, fugue, balance, spring . . . merely films without sonority, pulse, *élan*—utterly devoid of irresistibility. That such qualities are rare during any quarter I'll grant you, but I saw a Swedish comedy recently that had some of them—*Balloons*—starring Nils Poppe, "the Swedish Chaplin", a delightful and surprising pasquinade . . .

So one turns to other things for stimulus—the apocalyptic poets, Donne, Blake and Coleridge; or to that marvelously "cinematic" scene in *Finnegan's Wake* where the Irish washerwomen are gossiping at the banks of the Liffey at dusk; or to brooding contemplation of the 346 cans of still-unedited footage of Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico!* reputedly slumbering in the Bell & Howell vaults in Chicago; or to lamenting the absence from the screen of the lovely Frances Day (remember Korda's early *Girl from Maxims*?); or to wishing one could again watch Bobby Haggart and "Specs" Powell do their inimitable "Big Noise from Winnetka" and Hazel Scott play her demonic "Rainy Night in G"; or to marvelling at the sustained classic irony of Balzac's "The Fair Imperia"; or to try to measure the greatness of Cervantes as a poet (who is more fair among women than Dulcinea del Toboso, who never existed?)

Someone once said that man invents, or creates, not what he needs but what he can. Film producers, like all others, produce not necessarily what the world needs but what they can (or what *they* need). Sometimes the two things coincide. More often they do not, tho' then the world tries to adjust itself to the thing made. As a result, we live in a Procrustean age, and one of socio-technological dyspepsia. All the films, books, plays, music and art of one kind or another that are spawned day after day, without end, are as so many mirrors which reflect back an idealized portrait of their creators. What a wonderful world it would be if it were, indeed, inhabited by the people we see reflected back at us in mirrors.



MYRTE AND

An Anglo-

Described by



Myrte and the Demons, quite apart from its individual merits, represents a form of independent production which is important to an art bound too closely to the estimated commercial demands of the largest customer. It is a fantasy made by an organisation called the European Art Union, founded on idealistic lines in Berlin by Paulbruno Schreiber, a former Member of the Royal Academy of Arts in Dresden. When Hitler came to power, Schreiber emigrated to Holland, where he still works.

Myrte and the Demons is the first film to be produced by the European Art Union; it was shot silent on a wooded estate in the Haarlem district of Holland and brought over to Denham to have its sound track recorded. It was photographed by Bert Haanstra entirely on location with scratch equipment. A special score was composed by Marinus Adam and recorded under his direction at Denham by the London Symphony Orchestra. The dialogue and commentary was translated by Gyles Adams and recorded in English. The film could, of course, be recorded again, using another language.



Myrte, the little girl who is the heroine of the film, is played by Paulbruno Schreiber's daughter. The story is mythological, based on the struggle of good and evil in the regions of light and darkness symbolised by the open sunlit meadows and shadowy woodlands of the estate. The child belongs to the meadows where she plays with her pet animals and dolls; the Demons inhabit the woods and desire her destruction and the happiness she represents. The Demons are represented by puppets lurking in the trees during the daytime, but from darkness to dawn they are given human shape by the magician Horribos, who turns Myrte's pets and dolls to stone and lures her at nightfall into the woods. A good spirit of the meadow, however, gives her a candle which she must keep alight in the forests as a protection against evil. The main part of the film is the child's adventures during her night with the Demons; eventually her very innocence induces the humanised Demons to protect her, when at dawn, after a fantastic banquet in the forest presided over by the Demon King, her candle finally goes out.



It is easy to raise points of criticism of this first film. It has been cut drastically, but even so the dramatic weight of its action (as opposed to its theme) makes it essentially a short film, and it should have been conceived, in my opinion, as a film not playing longer than about forty-five minutes. There is no final decision in its style as to whether it is addressed to adult or child audiences: it is in parts too horrific for young children, but in treatment it is often too obvious to satisfy an adult imagination. The English commentary and some of the dialogue are often sentimental, and frequently underline what is quite clear from the

THE DEMONS

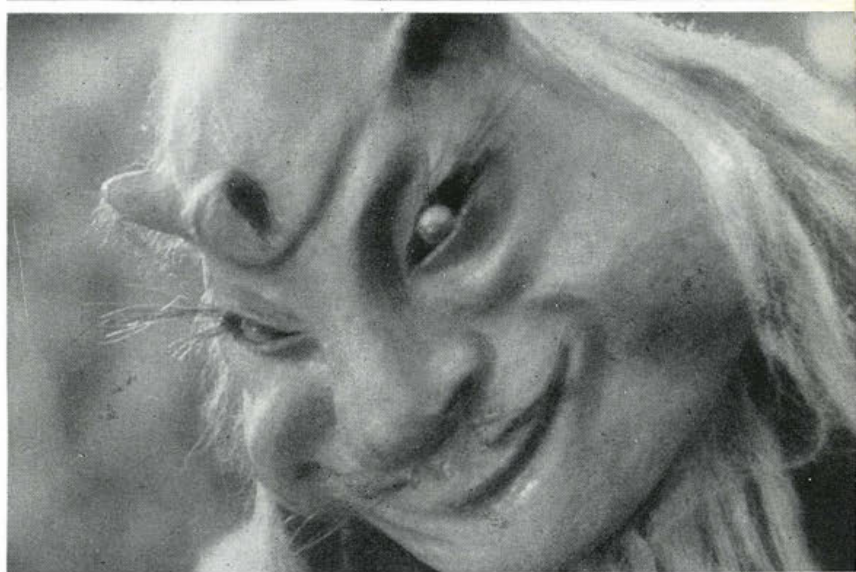
Dutch Production

ROGER MANVELL

visible action. Since the film depends entirely on situation and not on character to dramatise its theme, it would have been better had it been made specifically for children. Sometimes, too, the significance of the action itself is ambiguous: for example, the reason for bringing in the Man in the Moon, and the reason for a good deal of what the Demons themselves do in the long scene at the banquet is not quite clear, and this gives the film a feeling of vagueness in its dramatic structure. The present length of the film robs the climax of its essential and symbolic significance: it is not brought out dramatically why the Demons side with Myrte. This situation calls for a gradually built-up tension which finally should be broken by an emphatic *volte-face* when evil collapses in the face of the unconquerable goodness symbolised by the child. In the film the *dénouement* emerges beautifully rather than dramatically. The musical score, rich and tuneful though it is, tends to rely too much on repeating the same romantic themes, instead of varying strongly with the dramatic moods of the different situations.

These few comments are offered in a purely constructive spirit, for *Myrte and the Demons* has undoubted qualities, and if it is shortened still further, these might possibly emerge more clearly. The film has undoubted beauty in its sunlit meadows and in the artificially-lit forests at night. The scenes at dawn are outstanding photographically if not dramatically. The puppets, made by Mevr Alth Bigot, are vivid and terrifying: their movements are just sufficient to be effective, and no more: they seem to belong to the natural trees in which they hang. The humanised Demons are well characterised though far too static for a film, which is a point of direction. Myrte herself is pretty and has a natural air of innocence, though dramatically speaking it would have been better if at some stages of the story she had appeared more frightened. There is a beautiful short ballet danced in the forest by Marie-Jeanne van der Veen: its choreography is simple, but designed for filming. Where the feeling of the film is lyrical the music, over-rich elsewhere and without a proper contrasting note of tension, is very good. Throughout the film the atmosphere of place, as distinct from situation, is maintained well.

I feel this production unit has the right kind of attitude to film-making, and that they will have acquired experience of the greatest value from this first film. There are few enough films with the atmospheric qualities of *Myrte and the Demons*, and Paulbruno Schreiber might well make a number of subjects of this kind on a modest budget which would bring back fantasy to a medium that in recent years has almost forgotten it.





ITALIAN EXPERIMENT

By
Dr. VERDONE

ALL FOREIGNERS who have had an opportunity to visit the Rome studios are unanimous in their opinion that the progress made in Italian production within the last few years, is due to a great deal more than mere luck or chance.

A film can be made by the personal success of its creator, even in countries where a big film industry does not exist and we can immediately think of names in Switzerland, Hungary and Denmark, which country has produced the greatest example, Dreyer.

But a sound cinema must be based on a sound organisation, as the striking example of the British industry so eloquently shows.

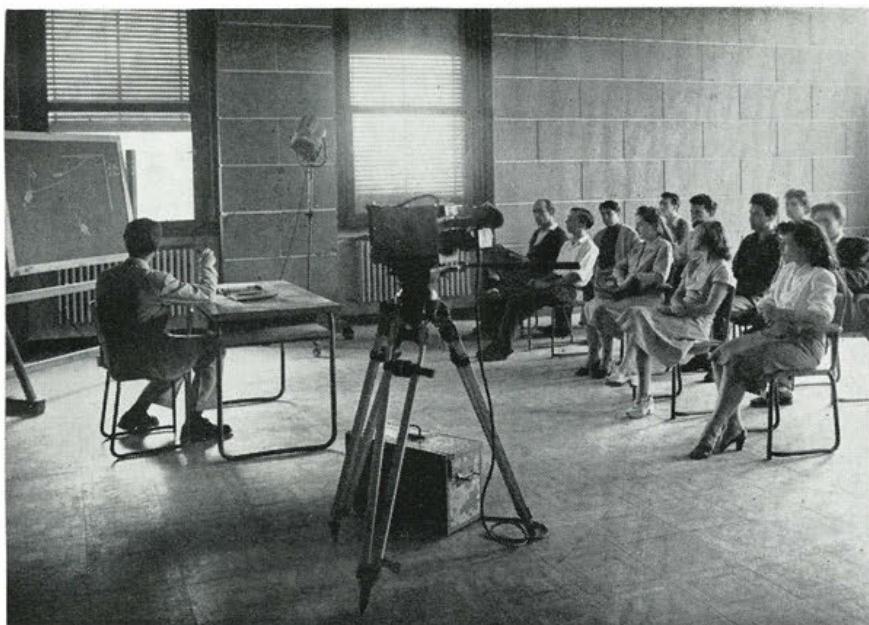
The Italian films which are being shown to-day, and which are winning warm applause on the screens of the World, were made in a favourable spiritual atmosphere, but also in the midst of a series of material (practical) difficulties which show that, at least for the moment, there is no satisfactory national organisation. But if we consider how and where the Italian directors (whose names are by now fairly well known in the international field) have been trained, if we follow their record, we realise that their success is not only due to their own genius, but to this general training in which the State, always ready to help

the National Cinema, has been in no small way instrumental. The general administration responsible for the cinema endeavoured in the past to strengthen the Italian production by creating a L.U.C.E. Institute for educational films (out of which have come nearly all the best documentaries produced by the country, Rossellini included, whose notable shorts on marine life will be recalled); by founding Rome's Cinecity, with its large grant of technical equipment, a cinema bank to facilitate the financial side, and a Film Experimental Centre for training technicians and artists.

The creation of this Experimental Centre in 1935 was due to the initiative of Luigi Chiarini, who was and still is, responsible for dealing with all the technical and artistic problems of the film.

There are film archives and a specialised library, Italian departments of filmology and scientific cinema, and the Centre is looked upon by the Directorate-General of Public Performances (Under-Secretariat to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers) on whom it depends, as a technical organ for film problems.

The constitution of the Experimental Centre is at present as follows: two big theatres (leased to the Universal Film,



which is bound by special contract, to employ the ex-pupils of the Centre, who can enter the field of production by way of useful practical experience); a pupil's theatre for try-outs and shorts, and then cutting rooms, recreation rooms, projection rooms, dance halls, a gymnasium, laboratories, dark rooms, dressing rooms, restaurant and service rooms. The Centre trains directors, assembly technicians, operators, sound engineers, scenic artists, dress designers, actors, actresses. Admission is by yearly competition. The department for training actors and actresses accepts pupils with certificates from secondary schools, but for the other courses it is necessary to have a University degree.

The number of pupils admitted depends on the demands of the industry within specific categories. In 1948-49, for example, particular importance was given to finding actors and actresses; further sound engineers and operators were not admitted, since in the view of the Industry, there was a surplus in these fields. The Centre offers its pupils all the artistic and professional help necessary, to the limit of the facilities and equipment at its disposal.

Lessons of technical character are alternated with those of practical experience in all fields; the director directs, the actor acts, and the sound engineer studies new machines, which he assembles under the guidance of the teachers, thus keeping the institution alive in experimental activity, for which purpose the Experimental Centre was founded. The pupil has in this way when he leaves the Centre, a broad professional training which makes for sound and balanced judgment.

Not an inconsiderable number of those leaving the Experimental Centre have contributed to the development of the Italian cinema: De Santis (*Caccia tragica*), Zampa (*Vivere in pace*), Germi (*Gioventù perduta*), the documentarians—Pasinetti, Cerchio, Paolucci, Chiari, Antonioni; actresses: Alida Valli, Carla del Poggio, Adriana Benetti, Clara Calamai, Marella Lotti, Elli Parvo, Jone Salinas, Luisella Beghi, Elena Zareschi; actors: Otello Toso, Andrea Cecchi, Vittorio Duse, Massimo Serator, and many others, apart from

countless number of dress designers, scenic artists, sound engineers, operators and assistant directors, from which last Luchino Visconti found some very efficient collaborators.

The courses in each section normally last two years and are free. For the more promising students, scholarships and prizes are available. At the end of each course, as we have already said, the pupils take part in the work of films produced in the theatres of the Experimental Centre by the company which has rented them, and in those produced directly by the Centre, such as *Via delle cinque lune*, which was made under the direction of Chiarini with the help of the students and the teachers.

In the cultural field the Centre has, since 1937, published a review, *Bianco e Nero*, which is one of the most quoted European sources of cinema studies.

Closely connected with all the cultural and scholastic activities are the film archives, which collects in suitable categories all the most important films of yesterday and to-day. Unfortunately this collection suffered much damage during the war, and is to-day being re-made with some difficulty.

In the state of reconstruction in which the Italian cinema finds itself, the Centre has perhaps been the first State organisation to fully pick up its work since the war. The cinecity and the L.U.C.E. Institute are still suffering from their war wounds, and the cinema bank does not offer the financial help which more prosperous economic conditions enabled it to do before the war. The Centre, confident of doing useful work for the progress of national production, continues in research and development. Ten years ago when the sceptics criticised this institution, there were to be found in the framework of the Experimental Centre those students who to-day, by hard work and artistic quality, have won world esteem. The unknown faces which we see there to-day may belong to the future leaders of the Italian cinema.

We have used "Experimental Centre" as a convenient translation of Il Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.



THE USE OF CARTOON IN INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS

By

H. C. STRICK

Visual Aids Officer, Central Office of Information

THE CONTENT OF an instructional film may be made up of "actuality" or of "cartoon"—or of a combination of the two. If "actuality" is defined as the photographic reproduction of the actual objects themselves, then "cartoon" may be taken as the symbolic representation of the objects by some such means as drawings or models. This representation is symbolic in the sense that few drawings or models, however close to "actuality", can give the same set of sensations as the real thing or even a photograph of the real thing.

It is possible to argue that all visual aids which are not photographs are "cartoons" in this symbolic sense. This point is worth making because it suggests that cartoon treatment in instructional films does not present an entirely new problem in visual aids, since cartoon treatment is as old as visual aids themselves. Film cartoon is, of course, more vivid, and hence accentuates all the virtues and vices inherent in symbolism.

It is very likely that those of us who, by education or inclination, are accustomed to this visual symbolism, tend to over-estimate its intelligibility to general audiences—particularly audiences of children. They may not even recognise the symbol as a representation of a real object at all; or if they do, the significance of the symbolism may escape them. It is true that there is an international symbol-language embracing a wide range of concepts, which children begin to appreciate at an early age; but like any other language, it can only be completely mastered by an experience of life which children inevitably lack and which we cannot take for granted even with an assorted group of adults. When we introduce cartoon into films which are to be used for teaching purposes, we should accordingly make as sure as possible that it will not be unintelligible to, or misinterpreted by, the audience at which it is aimed. Incidentally, this is true of all visual aids.

This, then, is one danger in using cartoon in instructional films. Another, it is often argued, is that there is an inclination, particularly among children, to associate cartoon in films with comedy and entertainment—"it might make them laugh in the wrong place". Indeed, the danger is real; and we should take pains to ensure that our cartoons are as un-funny as possible on those occasions when we must at all costs avoid the destruction of a serious learning process—although even the unintended joke may sometimes ease the effort of learning and help to point the lesson. There is, of course, a noticeable tendency for those responsible for instructional films to cash in on this tradition that film cartoon is amusing and to behave lightheartedly by design; and although this probably involves little risk where adult students are concerned, yet, with children, we still do not really know just how much risk is involved.

If the dangers are obvious, so also are the advantages. Variety, for example, is important in any piece of instruction, and cartoon sequences in a film bring variety. The film medium, however, presents so many possibilities of variety that this achievement in itself is not sufficient excuse for incurring the extra expense which cartoon entails. Cartoon must, however, be used when we want to show objects or processes not readily shown in actuality—sound waves set up by blowing into a flute, for instance, or the principle of an artesian well. It is also most useful for simplification purposes—the excluding of extraneous details or of confusing inessentials which might be difficult to exclude from actuality treatment, such as the mass of minutiae which impede a ready comprehension of the function of the mainspring of a watch. Similarly, cartoon may be used to exaggerate details of form or motion which might remain otherwise unnoticed or which might not be given their full importance; thus the action of a boat springing its timbers would be difficult to emphasise other than by cartoon, whilst by the same means the position of a bird's ear could be made more apparent.

CAN'T AFFORD AMMUNITION

If, however, these virtues of cartoon treatment are to achieve full realisation without being impaired by the dangers already mentioned, we must take great care to introduce and to use cartoon skilfully, remembering always three fundamental requirements of cartoon for instructional purposes—simple and obvious, as all fundamentals are when we happen to think about them, but, like so many fundamentals, frequently not borne in mind.

Firstly, cartoon must be competent and smooth. We are now so accustomed to skilful cartoon as an entertainment that we do not readily put up with inferior versions when we are in the more impatient and intolerant state of being educated. Children in particular react promptly to crude or jerky cartoons. They differentiate readily enough anyway between "the films we see at the pictures" and "the film we see in school"; and the latter cannot afford to provide young critics with gratuitous ammunition.

Secondly, film cartoons must be kept as simple as possible. We have already seen that one main advantage of cartoon is its power of simplification, of isolating the essence of an object or a process. It should not, then, be allowed to become confused again with over-elaboration of its own. Cartoon maps seem to be particularly vulnerable here; the simple outline is obscured by symbolic waves and towns, whilst symbolic meat, corn, ships, lorries and trade routes

jump in with bewildering rapidity and profusion. Once again a parallel might be drawn with other older visual aids; we have all seen charts and diagrams on the blackboards or walls of classrooms, which are intended to be aids to learning but in fact merely confuse the beholder. Our instructional films are not yet entirely guiltless of this crime.

Thirdly, cartoon and actuality should interchange as unobtrusively as possible. Nothing brings out more effectively the disadvantages of symbolism in an instructional process than the visual and mental jolt occasioned by an abrupt cut from actuality to cartoon or back again. If the screen at one moment is showing an actuality cow grazing in a field and at the next moment a diagram of the cow's second stomach, bearing no relation to the position, size or shape of the cow of which the mind's eye still retains an image, the thought process is bound to be interrupted. If, however, the actuality cow "freezes" and dissolves exactly into a cartoon cow; if a section of the cartoon cow is then removed to reveal the second stomach; if the cartoon cow is then brought forward slowly until the second stomach occupies the screen; and if the transition back again to actuality is made in the same gradual stages; then the symbolism stands a good chance of avoiding misinterpretation or unintelligibility, and the thought-process of the observer is not knocked off its track. This process, of course, follows the good old educational tenet of proceeding from the known to the unknown by a series of carefully linked phases.

The two problems of instructional films as yet unresolved—the use of sound and the use of colour—have perhaps a special application to this question of cartoon, if only because the entertainment cartoon has made very full and effective use of both. It is always difficult with visual aids to say, "This is good" or "This is not good", without reference to the class with whom they are to be used and

to the circumstances attendant upon their use; and perhaps this is peculiarly true in the present instance. It is easy to call to mind instructional cartoon films which use colour and sound in a way which makes them truly delightful; it is, however, difficult to call to mind an instructional cartoon film which could not have been made to do an equally efficient teaching job if it had been black and white and—possibly—silent. Perhaps the point really is that colour and sound make cartoon treatment even more symbolic than it inevitably must be. When we watch a Disney kitten—probably the most realistic of all his creations—the colour, which at best is still synthetic, and the sound track, accentuating the stealthy waddle and the expression of apprehensive determination, help the moving drawings to distil the symbolic essence of kitten, rather than to reproduce a true statement of what a kitten is really like in everyday life. In teaching, we are less concerned with presenting the symbolic essence of a diesel engine or a dogfish, than with establishing how in fact they work—and at a cost, moreover, within the reach of the Local Education Authority, which may not extend too frequently as far as sound cartoons in colour.

One final word about commentary and the cartoon. Without going into the argument of sound versus silent teaching films, it is perhaps permissible to suggest that commentary should be reduced to a minimum during the cartoon sequences of the film and excluded altogether for the period of time during which actuality dissolves into cartoon and vice versa. This gives the instructor an opportunity to help his class to interpret the symbolism correctly by acting as commentator himself in a manner which he knows will suit their intelligence, background and experience. If the instructor knows his class and his job, this device will ensure even to a bad film some measure of success as a visual aid—but don't tell anybody we said so!

THE QUARTER IN BRITAIN

By

ARTHUR VESSELO

THIS HAS NOT been the most distinguished of British quarters. A little comedy, a little ephemeral melodrama, a dash of costume stuff (including one sad misadventure, *The Bad Lord Byron*), some high-class singing and dancing, and a couple of independent frames, to all intents and purposes make up the tally, with only one or two items to hold the attention seriously for more than a moment.

One of those that can lay claim to serious criticism is Thorold Dickinson's *The Queen of Spades*, from the Pushkin short story about a Tsarist officer who trifles with black magic in order to win at cards, and ends up in disaster. This film has been assailed for making the dissipated frolickings of youthful Guards officers look too much like an undergraduate drunk party; but it is an open question whether such a portrayal is really very far from the truth. The atmosphere is built up with care and skill, and with more than a touch of imagination. If the film is

not entirely successful, it is because it seems to labour somewhat, to over-emphasise certain points at the expense of others: the director has an honest and conscientious hand, but he is not perfectly disciplined in the subtle concentration of his effects, and the upshot is an occasional prolixity and superficiality of fantasy.

Anton Walbrook is ill at ease and over-violent as the dabbler in magic; but Edith Evans shows her power as an actress in the part of the aged Countess with an old and guilty secret. Edith Evans appears again, with Emlyn Williams, in the latter's tale of the drowning of a little Welsh village at the end of the last century. *The Last Days of Dolwyn* is dramatically overloaded and, despite the authenticity of much of its Welshness, wears an artificial air. There are some good lines, and some very presentable characterization; but the author-director villain confounds us as well as himself by the excess of his villainy, and it is

Edith Evans' gentler mood which leaves the strongest impression.

Greatest applause during the quarter has been won by *Passport to Pimlico*, which has the initial virtues of a bright idea, an excellent comedy cast, and a capable director (Henry Cornelius). The script is by T. E. B. Clarke, who was also responsible for the script of *Hue and Cry*, and it expands, in light vein, on what might happen if a typical Cockney district were suddenly discovered to have extra-territorial rights, through the unearthing of an ancient document allocating it legally to the Realm of Burgundy. The result is amusing, but possibly not so wildly amusing as first enthusiasms have insisted. The defects are not unlike those of *Hue and Cry*: freshness of theme tends to be neutralized by somewhat piece-meal development, with exaggerated underlining of some of the humorous sallies. But perhaps one expects too much.

If *Passport to Pimlico* is not quite so outstandingly brilliant as many have thought it, that other piece of drollery, *Cardboard Cavalier*, is not so utterly and unrelievedly bad as superior critical opinion has asserted. Unquestionably, with its schoolboy guying of history and crude falsification of historical issues, it starts off feebly indeed and on the wrong foot; but Walter Forde's direction has by no means altogether lost its slapstick potency, and Sid Field's comic flair is in evidence even against a pseudo-Cromwellian background. There are some ingenious and genuinely funny passages (particularly those with the ghost) which counterbalance in fair part the dullness of the main idea.

With *Maytime in Mayfair*, all aglow in Technicolor, Herbert Wilcox has announced the temporary suspension of the Neagle-Wilding series. This is just as well, since the vein is petering out, and Wilcox is far too clever a judge of the box-office not to realize it. *Maytime in Mayfair* is a patched-up business, pinned together with long and boring fashion-parade interspersions, and much too obviously dependent for its appeal on past reputation. Since we are talking of the box-office pure and simple, it is curious that Wilcox has omitted the principal glamour-item, the gap in social status (real or simulated) between his boy and girl leads. Also—let's face it, Mr. Wilcox!—Anna Neagle and Michael Wilding have some way to go yet before they can compete with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

From Society to the seamy side. *For Them That Trespass*, directed by Cavalcanti, from Ernest Raymond's novel, makes a show of posing a profound human problem. Should the budding poet and playwright, in order to save an innocent man from the gallows or a life-sentence, disclose his own presence at the scene of a sordid crime, so endangering his whole career? To which the film more or less answers he might as well have done, for Justice will get him in the end. An answer not perhaps on the highest moral plane, but good enough for the pictures, one supposes. Apart from morals, the long process by which justice is done is in places a little less than plausible. More striking is the process of artifice by which Stephen Murray, as the literary man, advances from callow youth to prosperous middle age.

In the field of human and social problems, *Now Barabbas*, based on the play (director Gordon Parry), gets nearer to the core of things. Its representation of what goes on within the four walls of an English prison does at times bear much more resemblance to recognizable truth than in the common run of such films, where reality too often

founders in its course between the Scylla of the romantic and the Charybdis of the sensational. This admirable quality of personal and institutional verisimilitude is not however equal throughout. Where the more abnormal aspects of prison life are touched upon, the voice of the film sinks to a meaningless mumble: in fact it says so little in this context, and so obscurely, that it is difficult to see why it bothers to say anything at all. The character of the man sentenced to death is also unsatisfactorily drawn. His social background is an enigma, and his reactions are sometimes etched in with merely sentimental strokes.

The two independent frame films demonstrate once again up to a point the technical adequacy of the method (which is ultimately no more than a method of pre-planning in exact detail) without showing finally how far it is or is not cramping to inspiration. To date there have been few signs, in these films, of any inspiration to be cramped. *Stop Press Girl*, for example, is an elementary fantasy of the slimmest interest, about a pretty girl whose presence magically stops machinery, until love restores matters to normal. *Floodtide* (directed by Frederick Wilson), which deals with shipbuilding on Clydeside, has a welcome documentary realism of atmosphere, enhanced by some refreshingly genuine Scots accents and characters, but spoilt by a silly love story and weak time-continuity.

That it is altogether too easy to spoil a useful idea by ineffectual handling is proved in the most thorough fashion by *The Golden Madonna*, a light piece, directed by Ladislav Vajda, concerned with the pursuit of an Italian religious painting, reputed to be endowed with sacred powers, through the slums of Naples and the luxury villas of Capri. In principle this idea has plenty of inventive possibilities, and in fact the film does manage to produce a lively picture of Neapolitan slums and slum-dwellers, agreeably free of the more conventional tourist trimmings. But for the rest, or for most of it, there is a woeful amateurishness of conception, a wooden unconvincingness in the English leads, which are perfectly ruinous to the film's effect.

American stars and directors have participated in the making of two of the quarter's releases, but not, it must be confessed, to any sort of advantage. Possibly they have had some difficulty in acclimatizing themselves. George Cukor's version of *Edward My Son* moves with the massive plod of a tired elephant. It is unimpressively directed and unimpressively acted (Spencer Tracy, as the unscrupulous money-getter who devotes his whole being to pandering to a worthless son, is very far below his best); and somehow the cunning theatrical device of the son who is always spoken about, never shown, becomes a quite pointless trick on the screen. The film grows intolerably tedious after a while; and it has one incredible love-scene in a small room which has much meaningless leaping about in it that it is guaranteed to give the spectator either claustrophobia or St. Vitus' Dance.

As for *That Dangerous Age*, directed by Gregory Ratoff and starring Myrna Loy, one's chief feeling is of sympathy for Myrna Loy, and of regret that so good an actress should have had to grapple with so unworthy a script. Some of the dialogue is really unbelievably bad. In addition the camera-work appears to have gone out of its way to make the worst of her features. The story is something about a great barrister, a loving but neglected wife, and so forth—with some passages in Italy, which is clearly the rage these days. But it all hardly seems to matter a flick of the fingers.

FILM STUDY

By

CEINWEN JONES and F. E. PARDOE

*A condensed report of an interesting experiment conducted
at Albright Secondary Modern School for Girls, Oldbury.*

The authors hope to publish the full Report in due course.

AT THE BEGINNING of the school year 1947-48 when, for the first time, Secondary Modern Schools were confronted with the problem of pupils staying at school until they reached the age of 15, it was decided to introduce a course in "film study" as part of the curriculum of the top classes of Albright Secondary Modern School for Girls, Oldbury. This is a normal girls' S.M. school, one of five in the L.E.A., and the subject was taught for one period in each fortnight. Oldbury is entirely urban in character, on the fringe of the Black Country and almost entirely devoted to heavy industry and chemical manufacture. The girls' families are almost without exception employed in local factories and, normally, over 50 per cent. of the girls are similarly employed when they leave school.

There is little or no information available as a basis for planning a school course in film study. All previous work of this kind has been done in adult education, and the methods and aims must obviously be different from those used in the class-room. It was very early decided that to try to study the "great" film, or the "film society" film was unrealistic; the problem of the commercial film was more urgent and, in the authors' view, more important. There are degrees of badness in the films commonly seen in the ordinary cinema and if the course succeeded, however slightly, in making the pupils dissatisfied with bad films, then the course would be justified. In fact, practice caused even this modest aim to be modified; the course eventually resolved itself into an attempt just to make the girls think before going to the cinema, to weigh the merits of films against each other, to make cinema-going not an unthinking habit but a deliberate pleasure.

It immediately became evident that, if the course was to be confined to studying the ordinary film and the commercial cinema, no use could be made of the traditional supplies of illustrative material. The National Film Library catalogue, the basis of almost all "film appreciation", would here be useless. The films contained therein are so different from what is seen in the ordinary cinema that to use any of them would build up in the girls' minds the very idea that at all costs was to be avoided: that the film studied at school was different from the film seen in the cinema. It was, therefore, decided that all old, foreign, even documentary films were to be excluded from the course. This, of course, aroused considerable difficulties in arranging for illustration material but they were overcome, at least partially, by showing films after school to members of the "film class"

and others interested. These films were then referred to as illustrations of points made during the lessons. It was not an ideal method and experience caused it to be modified. The authors would, however, like to express their opinion (perhaps making a virtue of necessity) that it is doubtful whether there is much real value in the use, as illustrations, of short arbitrary selections from films made as complete entities; it does seem to encourage the tendency not to see the wood for the trees.

When planning the course in detail, it became obvious that the greatest problem to be tackled was that of audience passivity. The calm acceptance of whatever is offered on the screen seems to be the result of two factors: the conditioning, by various kinds of publicity, of the audience before it arrives at the cinema; the ability of the film to sweep the audience with it, preventing any use of intelligence in criticism by its hypnotic power over the emotions. Both of these factors apply particularly to young people.

It was realised that the removal of these two causes of audience passivity was the objective of the course, which then fell clearly into two parts:

(a) To counteract the attitude of "Let's go to the pictures, there's sure to be something on worth seeing" and to provide some sort of antidote to the publicity of all kinds which most films receive.

(b) To change the passive, unthinking acceptance of whatever appears on the screen to an active, critical assessment of the film's merits and demerits.

It is comparatively easy to set about tackling the problem of going to the cinema purposefully and not casually, and of teaching a critical attitude to film publicity; the first three lessons in the course bore an immediate and obvious fruit. The problem of getting the audience to think when they are seeing films is much more difficult. The essence of the problem seems to consist in trying to concentrate interest on some aspect of the film in order that the mind of the viewer shall be given something specific to consider and assess, thus providing sufficient mental activity to prevent the emotional impact of the film from sweeping the mind into passivity. The traditional method is a study of film technique, so that a concentration on the actual structure of the film provides the necessary mental sheet-anchor. There are many ways in which it might be done. It was decided finally to arouse sufficient interest in the

actual stories of films to use these as a criterion of film quality. As the course developed, this attempt was abandoned, as is recorded below, and an attempt was made to show "the power of the film-maker", i.e., to show how the film can, by its peculiar powers, arouse almost any emotion.

During the course there was a considerable amount of informal discussion as well as the more formal teaching, and although the discussion was at first of a poor standard (e.g., a comparison of the merits of favourite stars) it later developed in some cases into a gratifyingly intelligent assessment of films as a whole. Another feature of the work not actually connected with one particular lesson sprang from a further attempt to develop some sort of participation or active interest on the part of the girls when they were seeing a film. Most girls of this age seem enthusiastic about keeping diaries and, to capitalise this enthusiasm and at the same time to give them something active to do when they were seeing a film, the "Film Diary" was begun. The idea was enormously successful. The diary consisted of a loose-leaf folder (made by the girls themselves in a craft lesson) and a number of duplicated sheets of paper. On these were printed certain statements with spaces left to be completed by the girls after seeing a film. They were also encouraged to write any comments of their own where the printed statements did not offer any scope for these comments. As a help in completing these sheets the Monthly Film Bulletin was kept in the class-room, a certain amount of cinema publicity material was acquired and a few reference books were also provided. From the habit of consulting these after seeing a film (chiefly in order to be sure of the spelling of names for filling in the spaces on the diary sheets) there developed a habit of looking at them *before* going to the cinema. It might be added here that all the filling in of film diaries was done, willingly and even enthusiastically, in the girls' own time.

THE LESSONS

The first lesson of the course was devoted to overcoming the girls' suspicions (they were very interested but very doubtful of what the "film class" was going to be—an interesting comment on the traditional attitude of the school to the cinema), introducing the film diaries and beginning the idea of the foolishness of uninformed cinema-going. This last was done by telling a cautionary tale of a girl who bought a dress which she subsequently found she did not like and was unable to exchange. The second lesson followed on from this by drawing the parallel (with diagrams on the blackboard) between the production, distribution and exhibition of a film and the manufacture, wholesaling and retailing of a dress. The enormous number of persons required to produce a film was contrasted with the possibility of making a dress at home, and another diagram was drawn on the board of the progress of a film from "idea" to screen, with the various technical experts inserted in the proper place.

The third lesson was on elementary film criticism. This had already been introduced when the idea of the film diaries was explained. The class had seen *Man of Aran** on the previous day and they were asked to write down a list of five things they liked and five things they did not like about the film. From the ideas sprang a discussion and a list of "critical bases" (e.g., acting, photography, truthfulness, etc.) which, it was suggested, might be used by the girls as foundation for their completing the diary sheets.

The next three lessons were a part of an attempt to make a more detailed approach to film criticism and assessment, by considering the types of film-story and by judging films of one type only against films of the same type. The project was begun by listing the categories, with examples, into which film-stories can be divided and by pointing out the impossibility of comparing, say, a thriller with a musical. In the second lesson, comedy was chosen as an example and the broad division of comedy into visual and verbal was put before the class and illustrated by examples drawn from the film to be seen the following week. In the third lesson, the idea that a serious theme can be hidden under a comic treatment was used to emphasise the importance of thinking about films and not accepting them only at their face value.

It had been intended to go on to a study of types of film other than the comedy, but it became obvious that some of the girls were getting out of their depth and, in addition, it was necessary to correlate film shows very carefully with lessons, which was extremely difficult.

It was therefore decided to abandon the approach through the film-story and to discover some other approach, easier both for the girls and for fitting time-table requirements. In order to revive the interest of the weaker members of the class, who had been flagging a little during the rather theoretical passages of the three previous lessons, a lesson on film fashions was taken. This was not done entirely for its popular appeal, for it had been considered earlier and had been postponed in favour of the "story" approach. The purpose of the lesson was to show, by means of clothes, the difference between the reality of life and the representation of life on the screen. The girls brought along pictures of film stars obtained from a variety of sources and spent most of the lesson maliciously finding incongruities between the stars' clothes and the background against which they were posed. The question of publicity "tie-ups" was also touched on, and the "moral" of the lesson seemed to have been put over to most girls in the class.

The next group of lessons was aimed at teaching "the power of the film-maker", i.e., they were an attempt to bring home to the class the enormous power the technique of film-making has over the emotions. This is, obviously, no easy task and, equally obviously, was not wholly successful. The first aspect of the subject was the use of the camera's restricted field of view to concentrate the audience's attention. It was done by example (a close-up of a frightened face looking off-screen) and, most successfully, by the use of sheets of cardboard in which a hole with sides in the proportion of 3 : 4 was cut. By using this to look at various objects, all the girls seemed to appreciate the point at issue. From this, the class went on to consider, first on a diagram drawn on the blackboard, then on a "set" roughly arranged at the front of the class-room, the details for shooting a dramatic action scene in *Good Films and how to Appreciate Them*† by Jympson Harman (Daily Mail School Aids Dept.). A small member of the class was used as a typical member of the audience and, by whisking her from viewpoint to viewpoint, an attempt was made to show how the audience, mentally, is treated while seeing a film. This led on to the question of editing and the elementary principles of this were taken in the following lesson.

After this a lesson was given on the importance of the script writer and, as part of the lesson, a list of simple

* This film had had to be substituted for *Edge of the World*—which would have been much more suitable for the purpose.

† Used as the "textbook" for the whole course.

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL— EDINBURGH, AUGUST 21-SEPTEMBER 11

FOR THE THIRD YEAR an International Festival of Documentary Films forms a complementary part of Edinburgh's Festival of the Arts, and the event begins to acquire character and tradition.

The films, long and short, shown at the Festival come from more than twenty countries: both in its programmes and in its audiences the event is generously international. It attracts, as all film festivals do, those who cannot resist the peculiar fascination generated by an international collection of films. Some come for serious purposes of comparison and criticism; film-makers come for refreshment and inspiration, or to see how they do it elsewhere; and the majority are attracted by the variety of the films and the chance of discovering a work of genius before it is generally appreciated. Already the Edinburgh Film Festival has become recognised as an international clearing-house for those who believe in the documentary approach to film-making and the event has had a stimulating effect on styles and standards in many parts of the world.

This year the way seems clear for new reputations to be made. In Germany, through British and American encouragement, the cinema is reviving and some of the films promise to be as sensational as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was after the First World War. In Italy also, films are being made which owe little or nothing to studio influence and have a refreshing sense of reality. In Russia, film production has intensified in recent years, and this year's Festival will reveal some surprising contrasts in style and technique. One of the largest entries will, as before, be from Britain, still the world's chief source of documentary films. Canada and Australia, where the factual use of the film closely parallels its development in this country, will be represented by films of an impressive range and quality.

The Festival is organised by the Edinburgh Film Guild with the assistance of an Advisory Committee including representatives of the Association of Specialised Film Producers, British Documentary, the British Film Academy, the British Film Institute, the Central Office of Information, the Cinema Exhibitors' Association, the Edinburgh Scientific Film Society, the Federation of Film Societies, the Federation of Scottish Film Societies, the Federation of Documentary Film Units, Film Centre, the Scottish Educational Film Association, the Scottish Film Council, the Scottish Information Office, and U.N.E.S.C.O. The Organiser is Miss Caroline Jebb, Central Office of Information, London, and the Festival is organised from Film House, 6-8, Hill Street, Edinburgh, 2.

The opening performance will be given in the Caley Picture House at 7.15 p.m. on Sunday, August 21. Six other major performances will be given in the Caley Picture House on Sundays, August 28, September 4 and 11 at 2.30 p.m. and 7.15 p.m.

Daily performances will be given at 10.30 a.m. in the Monseigneur News Theatre, Princes Street, from August 22 to September 10 (except Sundays). Specialised performances will be held in the evening in the intimate theatre at Film House.

Following the success of last year's experiment, two special performances of international films for children will be given in the Rutland Picture House on September 3 and 10.

FORSYTH HARDY

themes was written on the board and the girls were given the task of writing a simple story illustrating one of these themes which, in their opinion, would make a good film. They had also to compile a list of "credits" for their film, i.e., a list of stars, and the film-makers who they thought would be suitable for the film. Some remarkable results (remarkable in every way) were obtained from this lesson.

The final lesson of the course was of a recapitulatory nature, and the opportunity was also taken of discovering the girls' reactions to the course as a whole. They were unanimously favourable and a number of valuable suggestions (as well as a number that were impracticable) were made.

CONCLUSIONS

It was obvious from its inception that this course could have no recordable results; all teaching of anything more advanced than mere technique suffers from the same drawback. The course set out to make sixty-two girls think critically about the cinema. This was done, more or less successfully, in class; whether these girls thought critically about the cinema out of class, or continue to think so now, when they have left school, is impossible to say.

At least, it can be said that an attempt was made to inculcate good habits of thought and a number of secondary purposes were served by the course. The course has, for example, broken down the tradition that the school and the cinema have no connection. Not only did the girls from the "film class" discuss films with the teacher, but girls from other classes made a point of coming for information about films, or to show scrap-books they had made (many of which showed signs of a considerable expenditure of time and energy). Possibly disapproval will be felt of this tacit encouragement of interest in the cinema. Yet the cinema is an almost essential part of modern life; those educationists who try to ignore it are hiding their heads in the sand; the only course is to try to control it.

Many of the girls, in the "film class" and elsewhere, seemed delighted to have found an adult willing to discuss films with them, and the opportunity this presented to these girls for the expression of their thought may well be counted as one of the benefits of the course.

When the course was planned, a complete syllabus for the course was made. Whether the original syllabus should have been continued is difficult to decide—the idea of studying types of film-story is one which seems very likely to be profitable if undertaken in the right way and it is felt that it was the method rather than the principle that was at fault. That is not to say that "showing the power of the film-maker" should be abandoned; to bring home to children the enormous power of the film medium, its almost incredible capacity to transmute the trivial into what seems important, is certainly the most valuable contribution to a cinema education that any teacher can make. The problem of how to do it is one of the most perplexing that faces the teacher of film study.

It is not the only problem. There are so many others to solve that it is impossible to list them, and problems in teaching are so dependent on circumstances which vary from school to school, class to class, even pupil to pupil, that it is doubtful if any good purpose would be served by listing them. Whatever the problems are, they can be solved only by teachers in the class-room—who are trying, realistically, to provide their pupils with some means of resisting the cinema's all-powerful appeal.

MIDWIFE TO THE TALKIES

By

EDMUND QUARRY

RECENT BRITISH FILM SUCCESSES in the U.S.A. have convinced the American film industry that the British movie is at last a competitor to be reckoned with. Our triumph is a little overdue, but "better late than never". Still, considering that we British were the spearhead of the cinematic revolution which brought the talking picture to the screen we should have been way ahead of the Yanks years ago.

The first British talkie—a short experimental film, a domestic comedy—was screened during the winter of 1924-25, three years before the Americans came along with *The Jazz Singer*. I remember that first British talkie very well indeed, for I wrote the script (such as it was) and I was present at its making.

The studio was a converted warehouse up a back alley in Clapham, London. On three sides the building was hemmed in by shops and little homes; on the fourth, a few yards away, the traffic of a busy main road roared and rattled and clanged unceasingly. A more unsuitable site for a film studio could hardly have been found, but here it was that the first British talkies were made. Shown on the screen to-day those pictures would be greeted with derisive laughter, but at that time they were regarded as almost miraculous achievements which, of course, they were.

In those days we knew little about sound and the problems connected with it which have long since been solved. We were like a ship sailing in an uncharted sea, and the wonder is that the talking in our first talkie did bear some likeness to the human voice.

I shall always remember my first visit to that studio in Clapham. Technicians, specially brought over from Germany and speaking little or no English, were busy assembling and mounting their complicated apparatus. A squad of men, with tall ladders and rolls of fabric, were blanketing walls, doors and windows in order to make the place more or less soundproof. Carpenters sawed and hammered, electricians ran about with enormous rolls of cable and flex. In one corner, at an improvised table—an inverted packing case—sat my friend the producer, a pre-war veteran producer of "silents", drinking strong tea from a tin mug. Everyone present felt that the occasion was historic. At that time the American talkie was still in the laboratory, whilst here we were actually about to make a talking film. But we didn't do any shooting that day, for our old friend the "technical hitch" intervened.

Three or four days later I was again summoned to the studio. The turmoil and confusion were even greater than before. Technicians were still assembling their apparatus, carpenters and electricians still hammered and banged and ran about with rolls of cable, men in their shirt-sleeves still slithered up and down long ladders. But in addition to all this there was the cast of four rehearsing unobtrusively in a corner to the accompaniment of spluttering Klieg lights and the steady hum of wheels in motion. A few spectators, invited for the great occasion, chattered excitedly and got

in everyone's way. Confusion, in short, still reigned supreme and it seemed impossible that we could do any filming that day. But after an hour some sort of order was evolved out of chaos, the producer called for silence, the lights blazed and the single camera began to roll.

A few minutes later we noticed that the studio, which apparently had been made airproof as well as soundproof, was becoming uncomfortably hot. We took off our coats. We sweated freely. Soon the heat was terrific, but nobody dared to speak, much less to move. The shooting went on. Then, in the middle of his best scene, the leading man crashed unconscious to the floor. The heat had been too much for him, and it took us fully five minutes to bring him round.

"Open the windows!" shouted the producer. A window was opened with difficulty, and the room was filled with what the B.B.C. calls "the mighty roar of London's traffic". Then we all trooped off to a nearby pub—cast, technicians and all—to consider the problem of how to make a room soundproof without depriving its occupants of air. After an hour we had got no nearer a solution, and so we dispersed, a little gloomily, it must be confessed.

Just how the puzzle was eventually solved I do not remember, but a day or two later the film was completed and was subsequently shown to open-mouthed audiences at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley and at one or two cinemas in the West End. In due course I received a cheque for my script, sufficient to pay for a new suit and a hat, both of which I badly needed.

But the most important part of the story remains to be told. That initial success—and it was a real success—was not followed up. Unlike Wall Street, the City of London was shy of the new invention, and the film industry, producers, distributors and exhibitors, did not believe that the public wanted the talking film, and soon the primitive studio in Clapham ceased to function. It was not, in fact, until the passing of the first Quota Act in 1928 that British interests began to sit up and take notice of the invention.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, experiments went quietly on until, one day in 1927, the *Jazz Singer* was shown to a wildly enthusiastic audience. Then came Al Jolson's *Singing Fool*, an even greater triumph. America had stolen a march on us. The production end of the British industry, which had just begun to recover from the effects of the war, was thrown into indescribable confusion, and we had to start all over again.

The irony of the affair is that those first experimental films of ours were produced on the "sound on film" system which has since proved immeasurably superior to the "sound on disc" method used for the first few American talkies and which was discarded about 1930. Thus we in Britain were not merely ahead of the U.S. in the actual production of talking pictures, but we were also ahead, about five years ahead, in our methods.

Ah, well!

INSTRUCTION BY FILM AT BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY

By

J. HORNE

EARLY IN 1948 the Universities Film Council was set up under the ægis of the B.F.I. and Cambridge University Film Council, to foster the use of film instruction in Universities of the United Kingdom.

This led to a number of Universities setting up their own local committees to keep contact with the National Committee, and to explore the possibilities of making greater use of films within the particular needs of University teaching.

Such a Committee was appointed by the Senate of Birmingham University, and a brief account of their findings and activities may be useful to other higher-level educational establishments when planning the formation of similar bodies.

The usefulness of the Film Committee has been established in its carrying out of many functions which separate departments or individuals would not be in a position to carry out, and chiefly in its work of co-ordination and general advice to the members of the University.

The conclusion is that other Universities and Colleges would most probably find it worth while to set up such a Committee, and to any who do so the following notes may be helpful.

The first action taken was to explore what had already been done, and what was required, by all the various Departments in all Faculties. It was quite surprising to find how extensive a use was being made of films both in instruction and research: but this was very unevenly distributed. Several Departments had projectors, and used them occasionally, but only the Medical Departments made really extensive use of the film. There may be a mutual influence between the wide use of cinefilms and the existence of first-rate catalogues in the fields of medicine which has hitherto not been achieved by other fields of learning where the film may form just as valuable an aid in teaching and research.

Both Medical School and Hospital Centre use films of pathological conditions and biological processes, and many Departments are also themselves producers of films, notably the Departments of Dental Prosthetics, Physiology, Anatomy and Pharmacology.

A second main user of films, it was discovered, was the Department of Education, where amongst other uses, the proper place of visual aids in elementary education forms naturally a part of teacher training.

Yet, the general result of the first enquiry was to show that the possible uses of films were not fully and generally appreciated, and certainly not fully exploited, by the majority of Departments. There were but few film showings by departmental societies, and the Students' Film Society confined its activities to one section of the University only, and solely to feature films.

Why was this? It appeared to be due to:

- (a) Lack of apparatus.
- (b) Lack of trained operators.
- (c) Lack of information about suitable films (there is no catalogue of films suitable for university instruction—now a priority consideration of the Universities Film Council).
- (d) Lack of really suitable films.
- (e) Lack of a readily available centre for information and assistance.

The Committee have taken the first steps toward remedying these lacks.

They obtained a special grant to purchase a 16 mm. sound projector and this projector has been in constant use by departments and most students' societies since it was installed.

The Committee furthermore arranged for a local firm to train

small groups of operators from time to time, so that one or two skilled men are always available.

The Libraries co-operate in that they house full sets of available catalogues, some of foreign origin, while the Secretary holds another set and some rare reference lists of films, and is always available for consultation.

Several showings of films grouped by Faculty interests were held which in all cases (Arts, Commerce, as well as Science and Technology) were attended by large proportions of staff. These demonstration programmes certainly served to stir up interest and awaken an appreciation of the possibilities of film instruction, but also manifested the great dearth of suitable films almost in all fields outside the medical and biological. The films interesting to Arts or Commerce and even to Economics students are very few and far between, as the special demonstration programmes for the staff of these Faculties clearly showed. An occasional foreign language film, or one on Social Studies, a method film for teachers in training, a mere handful could be called suitable, but those few show great possibilities inherent in the medium. Some useful information is being obtained from time to time through close liaison of the secretary with Commonwealth or Foreign Universities, either through the U.F.C. or directly, by personal contacts made or revived at the 1949 Edinburgh Documentary Festival where a special committee to foster international co-operation constituted itself. This committee will meet in 1950 to prepare a Film Festival of educational works, mainly at University level, and act as a pre-viewing panel for a Film Programme to be given within the Festival of Britain, 1951.

Close contact is also maintained with the Scientific Film Association and the Birmingham Film Society and its many active sections, so that information services from various outside bodies are available, to which special information has to be added which comes to the Committee from Industrial or Governmental Film Departments.

With all these sources of information at their disposal, the Committee can, through their secretary, act as a centre for information and guidance, and indeed it has been called upon in this capacity to a most encouraging degree, both in and outside the University. Also other Universities have occasionally turned to the Birmingham Committee for advice and information, and thanks to its position in Birmingham chiefly, the links with industry have been increased in number and strength. It has proved useful to have such a centre for cinematic information and assistance, in many cases of guest lecturers who wished to show their own or other special films, and whenever the University authorities are approached on matters relating to films in any way.

The Committee have finally played a vigorous part in gathering information from within the University, on films such as would interest the Cataloguing Committee of the U.F.C. who are now compiling the first issue of lists of suitable films. A regular viewing panel has been created by only two Departments, but the Committee have often been asked for appraisals of films, a notoriously difficult task which the experts on the Committee could not have countenanced but for the most active co-operation of colleagues and students alike who keep on supplying relevant information on films.

The Committee is greatly interested in the relaxation of international barriers obstructing the free flow of information and material which would so greatly enhance the work of both Committee and Council, and will support any collective action which will lead to this result so desirable from any, not only educational, "aspect".

ESSAYS BY EISENSTEIN

Essays in Film Theory, edited and translated by Jay Leyda.
279 pp. Illustrated. Harcourt Brace & Co. (New York).
\$4.50.

EISENSTEIN'S FILMS, unlike his writings on films, existed on three levels—as propaganda, entertainment and in a purely intellectual sphere. His writings existed only on the highest strata of these three levels, the latter. But it is only through his writings that we can begin to appreciate the enormous thought, research and scholarship that went into the making of his films and which makes going back to them an endless source of joy not only for the cinéast but for all students of all arts, for Eisenstein drew from everything to construct his laws for the cinema. It is what gives these writings such a universal appeal and what will keep them green with eternal Spring. . . .

Like the previous "Film Sense", this book is a compilation of essays which Eisenstein either wrote for publication in various periodicals or delivered, himself, as lectures. Most of them have not always been easily available to film students before, or they existed only in inadequate English renderings. New translations have been made in the latter instances. The twelve essays, including the famous "Dickens, Griffith and the Film of Today", complement the previous volume, which might be called "the grammar of the film", i.e., the fundamental precepts of film making. This book goes on from there—how problems are met and solved under the most complex circumstances once the fundamental technique has been understood and mastered. Both books are no convenient *post-facto* rationales of Eisenstein's methods. His films were a blossoming of his theories about films, not vice-versa. He really had theories about film-making, like Griffith had them, though Griffith's theories were intuitive, while Eisenstein's were socio-philosophical. Griffith didn't write about films because, as a pioneer trail-blazer for all that were to follow, he was too

busy making films at a time when it was easy to make them, there not having been so many social and economic restrictions to film making in his day as there are now. And yet, tho' Griffith made literally hundreds of films, his stature is what it is because of that seemingly maximum half-dozen memorable ones—which seems also to have been the maximum for Flaherty and Pudovkin, Stroheim and René Clair, Dovzhenko, von Sternberg, Pabst, Lubitsch, Lang, Renoir and the rest of that hallowed company—with the sole exception of Chaplin, of course, whose every film (almost without exception) since *The Tramp* (1915) has been exquisite—a record absolutely unparalleled and which is one of the several things which makes his position in the world of films so unique and of such solitary grandeur. (Some achieved cinema immortality with just one or two films, *vide*, Dreyer and Vigo.) Eisenstein's six films illustrate his laws governing the making of films in such a way that they do not exclude the imposition of different individual styles and temperaments on these laws. A musical student studies the same laws of harmony and counterpoint that served Brahms and Ravel. How the student uses these laws as a springboard (which is all that they are intended to be) for his trajectory, be it a concerto or a film, depends on him. Nor are Eisenstein's the only laws. The whole art of cinema is as vast and as far-reaching as any other art. There is more than one way to make a film work of art as there is more than one way to write a great concerto. First, you must have something to say. Second, you must know how to say it. Rules in art are only meant to help you say it. They may also guide your choice in thematic matter. Eisenstein's own rules guided *him* in choice of thematic matter . . . *art as a servant of the people*. This, of course, is not the only theme, but in these parlous days and in such a mass medium as the screen it is a highly salutary and important one.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

Les Cent Visages du Cinema, by Marcel Lapierre. (Paris, Grasset, 1948.)

The preparation of an anthology such as Marcel Lapierre gave us in 1946 undoubtedly required close acquaintance with the Cinema and its personalities and literature.

In his new book, M. Lapierre gives us the benefit of his knowledge in a form that can best be described as encyclopædic, covering, as it does, half a century of cinematographic activity throughout the world.

Since he is less concerned with the history of the art of the film than with the cultural, economic, political and national backgrounds against which the cinema has developed in the various countries of the world, his work is not directly comparable with those of, say, Rotha, Vincent, or Bardèche and Brasillach. Nevertheless, a factual rather than critical approach means

that much of the information contained in the book is already common knowledge, although there is evidence of considerable research among half-forgotten and relatively unknown sources.

The presence of so much material in a single volume demands, however, that it be readily accessible for reference as well as sustained reading. It is a great pity, therefore, that the book possesses no index, but merely an annotated table of chapter contents which is quite inadequate for reference purposes.

The book is divided into two main parts: "Le Cinéma vu de chez nous", and "Le Cinéma dans le monde". The first part—330 pages—is devoted to the French cinema, and such foreign events and influences as have affected its development, while the second part—370 pages—consists of more or less detailed summaries of work and progress in other parts of the world.

America is given pride of place with 102 pages, followed by Germany—68, Italy—23, Scandinavia—19, Great Britain—32, Russia—40, the Far East—18, Central Europe and the Balkans—19, Spain and Latin America—16, and the *et cetera*, comprising the Low Countries, Switzerland, the Baltic States and the Middle East—16 pages.

Since the author describes his book as a balance-sheet of fifty years of world cinema, the amount of space devoted to each country is some indication of his assessment of its contribution to the whole. To question these evaluations would be invidious, since matters of personal taste and experience would be involved, but it can be said that on the whole M. Lapierre has balanced his accounts carefully and responsibly and that his efforts have been well worth while.

The stills have been well chosen, many

of them being new or unusual, but the sketches and caricatures that are liberally dispersed throughout the text are a lapse of good taste and give the book an appearance that belies its claim to be seriously studied.

COLIN BORLAND

Films in Focus, by Richard Auty. (1949, 9d.) **The Crisis of a British Film.** In Map Review, No. 76. (1949, 1s. 6d.) (Both published by Bureau of Current Affairs, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.)

Although the crisis in the British Film Industry has now lost a lot of its press publicity, nevertheless it is still with us, and a complete solution has yet to be found. A number of solutions have been put forward, but a good deal of confusion still exists inside the industry and out, as to who is responsible for the present crisis and, in fact, what it is all about. The majority of the public paying its one and ninepence at the box office and still having to stand in long queues outside the "local", is unable to understand why there should be any crisis at all. Inside the industry nearly everyone has their pet solution. If it's not the distributors or renters, it's the wastefulness of the producers: if the "virtually integrated combines" within the industry are not to blame, it's the restrictive practices of the unions. The question remains: who is responsible?

A lot of literature has been published on the crisis and the National papers have been flooded with correspondence: a working party has been set up by the Government to investigate the alleged excessive costs in the industry, but as yet has made no report. Until the publication of "Films in Focus" no impartial survey of the position was available. This little pamphlet (which is designed to be read in conjunction with Map Review No. 76, *The Crisis of a British Film*) sets out to explain in the simplest possible terms what the crisis is all about, and how it came into being. No great attempt is made to suggest a detailed solution: this is presumably left to the discussion groups for which it is primarily intended.

PETER PLASKITT

Experiment in the Film, edited by Roger Manvell. (Grey Walls Press, 1949, 15s.)

"Experiment in the Film" is an interesting series of nine essays by well-known authorities on the cinema. The editor has contributed a comprehensive introduction dealing with various aspects of film art as exemplified in the productions of all countries. His practice of describing in minute detail, almost frame by frame, notable sequences from certain films chosen as examples of particular experiments rather detracts from the readability of this essay, but it has the great advantage that those who have never seen the film in question cannot fail to take the point.

The French and American contributions deal solely with the avant-garde movement in their respective countries. Brunius' article is lively and intelligent, and informed here and there with a delicious malice—see his castigation of what he terms the second avant-garde, Gance,

Epstein, Mallet-Stevens, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all! The American article, by contrast, seems surprisingly ingenuous but is of considerable interest since so little is known here of this side of film work in the United States.

Two essays deal with the Austro-German film. One, by Hans Richter, is a purely personal account of avant-garde work by one who was intimately connected with it. The other, a rather didactic affair, by Ernst Iros, entitled "Expansion of the German and Austrian Film" lives up to its own title admirably but is overloaded with descriptions of films which have little or no claim to be "experimental". The translation is adequate.

The two articles on the Russian film constitute a rhapsody on Soviet achievement—well seasoned with political theory. It is noteworthy that the only mention of *October* comes in Dr. Manvell's introduction. There are a couple of interesting pages on the stereoscopic film.

Edgar Anstey deals efficiently with the British contribution to experimental film, rightly stressing the importance of the Percy Smith *Secrets of Nature* series. John Maddison concludes the volume with another article of world-wide scope on the scientific film.

NORAH K. LEWIS

Entr'acte (René Clair), edited by Glauco Viaggi, 1945; **Zuiderzee** (Joris Ivens), edited by Corrado Terzi, 1945; **Vampyr**, **L'étrange Aventure de David Gray**, edited by Aldo Buzzi, 1948. (Milan, Poligono.)

These volumes are the first in the "Scripts" series published in the *Biblioteca Cinematografica* collection: the fourth is to be *The Blue Angel*. The aim is to give a résumé, based on the script, of some films of the past which constitute landmarks in the life of the cinema at the time of their appearance, but which have since been neglected or superseded with the advent of the sound film. The outlines are amply illustrated with stills from the films, and are preceded in each case by a short critical essay.

Of the three directors whose work is illustrated, René Clair is, of course, the best known, though *Entr'acte* is an early and now almost forgotten work. It was produced in Paris in 1924, as a part—the "entr'acte cinématographique"—of Picabia's ballet, *Relache*, with Eric Satie's music. Vizzi, in his introductory essay, draws attention to the similar technique of René Clair and Satie in their respective spheres, and regards *Entr'acte* as a good example of anti-Impressionism; but he disagrees with those who see in it strong links with Dadaism or even with surrealism.

Zuiderzee is a very different type of film, being in fact a very early documentary on the reclamation of the Zuider Zee. Little precise information is known up to the present about Joris Ivens, its maker, a Dutchman, who subsequently produced films in Russia; but a biographical note gives the titles of eight films directed by him between 1927 and 1937, and places *Zuiderzee* in the early 1930s. In his introductory comments Corrado Terzi stresses Ivens' poetic treatment of his subject, which causes him to present his theme as a

struggle between man and natural elements, rather than a sociological problem.

Dreyer's *Vampyr*, based on Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly*, first appeared in 1931, three years after his famous *Joan of Arc*. After *Vampyr* this Danish director produced no great film for ten years, till the appearance in Copenhagen of *Vredens Dag* (*Dies Irae*) in 1942-43. This film of the early sound period illustrates Dreyer's masterly economy in the use of sound to achieve the requisite atmosphere of mystery and horror. There is very little actual speech, and this merely intensifies the effect of the incidental sounds introduced.

These three carefully produced volumes form a valuable addition to the bibliography of cinema history, and will enable the student to visualise for himself significant films of the past which can now only be seen as rare revivals.

MURIEL GRINDROD

Making Lantern Slides and Filmstrips, by C. Douglas Milner (9s. 6d.); **Filmstrip and Slide Projection**, by M. K. Kidd and C. W. Long (7s. 6d.), (both Focal Press, 1949).

These companion volumes are worthy additions to the range of works on photographic subjects from the Focal Press. They offer readers much valuable information which is very evidently the considered and tested result of extensive practical work by the authors.

Mr. Milner's book is a complete guide to the making of lantern slides and filmstrips which will be as useful to the amateur photographer commencing to produce his own transparencies as to the advanced worker. An exceptionally useful section is that dealing with the production of filmstrips. It places in the hands of the lecturer, anxious to prepare personal illustrative material in the filmstrip form, a reliable guide enabling him to hand to the commercial processor his materials in the most convenient form for successful reproduction. To the worker who is prepared to go further and make the actual strip with amateur equipment it gives much helpful advice in overcoming many of the difficulties which those who have experimented in this field will have encountered.

"Filmstrip and Slide Projection", by M. K. Kidd and C. W. Long starts where Mr. Milner's book finishes. It provides, at the same high level, information which should enable the operator to achieve the best projection of transparencies with modern miniature instruments. The difficulties of the beginner have been well appreciated and the authors successfully fore-arm him with the means to overcome them. The book includes a comprehensive survey of available projectors, advice on the adaptation of standard optical lanterns and complete constructional details for those who wish to make a projector for themselves.

Neither of these books was written specially for teachers, but both will prove particularly valuable to those who are developing modern methods of visual presentation.

F. E. FARLEY

How to Script Amateur Films, by Oswell Blakeston. (Focal Press, 1949, 6s.)

The second in a series of handbooks, Mr. Blakeston's modest, conversational guide to script-writing contains a good deal of useful information which, while carefully related to the means that amateurs usually have at their disposal, has in some cases a wider application. Mr. Blakeston specifies three basic components of a good script—balance, timing and economy—which is as good a way as most of saying that a script should be well constructed. He also clearly believes the axiom that "it cannot be said often enough that the basic material of the film script is movement". He is not an unmitigated pre-planner, and grants the occasional necessity of "extemporisation within a framework of construction".

The book also contains examples of scenarios for amateurs: short broken-down sequences of such simple subjects as a girl preparing dinner in the kitchen and a baby in a playpen; a longer scenario about the adventures of a cat, and a three-reel "heavy" called *The Hour of Darkness*.

There is a serviceable glossary at the end of the book, which gives all the technical terms that amateur scriptwriters are likely to need. The illustrations (frame by frame drawings by John Halas of suggested sequences) are the least fortunate part of the book, since they encourage rather hackneyed continuity devices, and one on page 74 perpetrates a definite technical error—a direct reverse shot, which should never be employed. But in general "How to Script" serves its purpose adequately.

GAVIN LAMBERT

Cine-Film Projection (1949, cloth 10s. 6d., paper 8s. 6d.); **Projectionists' Fault Finding Chart** (1948, 2s. 6d.), both by Cecil A. Hill. (Both Fountain Press); **How to Film as an Amateur**, by G. Wain. (Focal Press.)

The publication during the last year of books to help the sub-standard film (8 mm., 9.5 mm. and 16 mm.) enthusiast is to be welcomed, especially as much of the improved post-war equipment requires a greater knowledge on the part of the operator. The introduction of these new technical books offers no excuse to those users who had the misguided idea that the more expensive their equipment, the less attention need be given to it; or to those who, because poor results were obtained, blamed the equipment rather than their own lack of knowledge.

One of these books is "Cine Film Projection", by Cecil A. Hill. By lucid exposition he has covered admirably every aspect of his subject, amply justifying his object in writing the book, which was "to inform the novice and to guide the professional". In addition to chapters on projector systems, accessory equipment, screens and the care of films and apparatus, he has many useful wrinkles to give. Those who are considering buying projectors will obtain great benefit from the detailed description, photographs and fair assessment of representative makes of projectors. Professional projectionists especially will find the chapters on exhibiting, legal aspects and fault finding (elaborated in the same author's "Projectionists' Fault Find-

ing Chart") particularly useful. One could not agree more with his chapter on visual aids in education, especially in what he writes about the lack of standardisation of "still" projection equipment and the necessity for teachers, who use these tools, to know how to apply them to the best advantage. The author stresses the need for a name to take the place of 16 mm., in the first place to differentiate it from other sub-standard widths and secondly because of the added importance given it during the war. His suggestion of CINEMIL seems difficult to better.

In all fields of human endeavour practical guidance—either from a teacher or a book—obviates a certain amount of work and a great deal of disappointment to those who are making efforts to achieve success. We, therefore, note with pleasure the announcement of four Focal Cinebooks: "How to Film", "How to Script", "How to Direct" and "How to Project"; they should cover the whole field of amateur cine work. So far only the first two have appeared and this review will concern itself solely with the first. The title of the book is general enough for the author to cover a very wide field and he has been tempted to take advantage of this, which seems a mistaken policy, as an overlap with the subject matter of the succeeding books must inevitably occur. After introducing the reader to the technical details of cameras, various types of lenses and filters, film speed and exposure meters, the writer brings us to the main part of the book. His chapters on shooting, planning and editing are well illustrated with diagrams and scripts and show him to be an author who writes from experience. For these chapters alone the book is well worth buying. Whether the sections on processing and projection should have been included is another matter, since neither of these subjects can be adequately dealt with in a few pages. In any case the budding enthusiast would be well advised to leave the processing of his films, especially if they are reversal, to the professional, who is properly equipped to carry out such work.

C. R. GIBBS

The Life Story of Danny Kaye, by Dick Richards. (Convoy Publications, 1949, 5s.)

This is intended as a fan book and, as such, succeeds admirably. It is lavishly interspersed with adjectives, describes Danny Kaye as, among other things, a Golden-Haired Goon and a Six Foot Bundle of Nervous Energy, and tells the story of his career and rise to fame. The fact that there is another book on the market which tells the same story in almost identical terms seems to make this further delving into the gold mine of Danny Kaye and his Effects a trifle superfluous. The book is well illustrated with photographs which show the wide range of Kaye's versatility, "the product", to quote the book, "of the agile, restless, impromptu brain of this comic immortal"!

DAPHNE TURRELL

Film User Year Book, 1949, compiled by John Montgomery. (Current Affairs, 1949, 10s. 6d.)

The reference book is the first issue of an annual volume intended for all concerned with the screening of 16 mm. film and 35 mm. filmstrip in industry, education and entertainment. It is a pioneer in this field and, although it provides a large amount of information, the publishers do not claim that this information is exhaustive and draw attention to the fact that this would be impossible as long as 16 mm. film and filmstrip continue to develop at their present speed. The present volume includes surveys of the 16 mm. factual and entertainment film in 1948 and of visual aids and new equipment in 1948. Projectionists' technical data is given and information provided on 16 mm. and filmstrip projectors, light sources and film-user law. There are also lists of organisations and societies, national and local, of periodicals and books, 16 mm. films of 1948, libraries and distributors, recordings of special effects, equipment and services, and many others.

Repertoire General Illustre Des Films, "année cinématographique" 1948-49. Centrale Catholique du Cinema et de la Radio. (Paris, Penser Vrai, 1948.)

The vast number of films in circulation, the diversity of their artistic and moral value and in the ages of the members of cinema audiences present difficult problems. The only possible solution is to have a knowledge in advance of all films that are to be shown. To this end, the Repertoire General gives details of production, an analysis and appraisal of 1,000 recent films and a simple indication of the moral aspects of all other films in circulation. The five classes into which the films are divided are explained at the end of the book. The appraisals seem, as is natural, to be made from the moral and religious rather than the æsthetic standpoint. The book is well illustrated by reproductions of stills.

Look and See: Visual Aids in the Service of the Church, by Colin Beale. (Edinburgh House, 1949, 3s. 6d.)

"In the whole of this book", writes the author in his first chapter, "we shall be concerned with the use of visual aids for a purpose: to inform, to educate or to stimulate but not merely to entertain. Thus, we shall be concerned with the use of visual aids as a tool to carry out some larger purpose". There are certain principles which must be borne in mind in the preparation and use of visual aids, and the author's object is to show what these principles are. He looks forward, as he says, to some ways in which the Church and Christian organisations may deliver their message in a world where it may be necessary to use new methods in addition to old and well-tried ones. The book includes chapters on projected still pictures (lantern slides, filmstrips, episcopes and epidiascopes), motion pictures, non-projected visual aids (flat pictures, maps, charts, etc.) and how to use them, their presentation and display and on how to make various visual aids. The main sources of material and information are also given. The book is illustrated by line drawings.



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No. 3. THE POWER OF JESUS IN MIRACLE 40 frames.

- (a) Christ at the Marriage Feast.
- (b) Christ and the Multitude of Fishes.
- (c) Christ stills the Storm.
- (d) The Feeding of the Five Thousand.
- (e) Christ and the Withered Fig Tree.

No. 4. THE LOVE OF JESUS IN MIRACLE 40 frames.

- (a) Christ and the Nobleman's Son.
- (b) The Healing of the Leper.
- (c) The Healing of the Man with the Palsy.
- (d) The Raising of Lazarus.
- (e) The Healing of Bartimaeus.

No. 5. THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM 45 frames.

- (a) The Sower.
- (b) The Wheat and the Tares.
- (c) The Drag Net.
- (d) The Leavens.
- (e) The Hidden Treasure.
- (f) The Goodly Pearl.

No. 6. LOST AND FOUND 34 frames.

- (a) The Parable of the Lost Sheep.
- (b) The Parable of the Lost Coin.
- (c) The Parable of the Lost Son.

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